

The University of Chicago

A STUDY
IN THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF
JOHN STUART MILL

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES IN
CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

1938

By
ALBERT WILLIAM LEVI

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INTRODUCTION

The phrases "social planning" and "a planned society" tend to recur in the vocabulary of contemporary statesmen, social scientists, and social philosophers. They have a ring of novelty in the ears of this generation but their meaning is not new. In a very general way, to plan means to utilize knowledge to attain objectives. Hence "social planning" might be defined as the utilization of knowledge about society to attain the objectives of society. Unfortunately the term "society" is not strictly unambiguous. So we must ask further, utilization of what knowledge, and exactly whose objectives? Again, if by "society" is meant something broader than the organization of men in political units, a distinction must be made between political and non-political planning. Is the latter a part of social planning? And if only the former is really meant by the phrase, will not the method of planning take on the complexion of the political order within which planning is to take place? This question serves to indicate that a distinction may be necessary between planning for a society, and planning by a society and that the relation between these two types of planning may be very different in various political systems. Under a dictatorial and under a parliamentary government, planning could take on very different aspects.

It is not my intention to investigate in this dissertation the actual usage of the phrase "a planned society" in the texts of contemporary social theory, or to state exhaustively the meanings which it might have in different political contexts. Instead, I shall return to the social philosophy of the nineteenth century;

indeed, to that type of nineteenth century social philosophy which perhaps with justification has been called liberal-democratic, in order to investigate the conception of social planning therein exhibited. This dissertation will deal with the problem of a planned society as historically localized in the social philosophy of John Stuart Mill (1806-1873).

As far as I have been able to determine, it is true that the words "a planned society" do not appear within the body of Mill's writings. This, however, does not imply absence of constant preoccupation with problems of social planning. Essentially Mill was a social reformer. This passage from the Utilitarianism expresses the profound conviction which controlled the formation of his basic social judgments.

No one whose opinion deserves a moment's consideration can doubt that most of the great positive evils of the world are in themselves removable, and will, if human affairs continue to improve, be in the end reduced within narrow limits. Poverty, in any sense implying suffering, may be completely extinguished by the wisdom of society, combined with the good sense and providence of individuals. . . . As for vicissitudes of fortune, and other disappointments connected with worldly circumstances, these are principally the effect either of gross imprudence, of ill-regulated desires, or of bad or imperfect social institutions. All the grand sources, in short, of human suffering are in a great degree, many of them almost entirely, conquerable by human care and effort;¹

That "care and effort" which might obviate the social maladjustments and imperfections of his time was Mill's constant preoccupation. The first three quarters of the nineteenth century found the Industrial Revolution in England far advanced. But as has been said,² the steam engine was invented too soon for the happiness of man. During Mill's youth the working classes were looked upon as labor power to be exploited, child labor was common,

¹John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Liberty, and Representative Government (Everyman ed.; New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1929), p.14.

²J. L. and B. Hammond, The Rise of Modern Industry (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., Inc., 1926), pp. 190-263.

and in a sense the age had turned aside from making a just society in order to seek maximum production.¹ This situation had become transparent when Mill was beginning his literary career.² Thus the ameliorative tendency pervades Mill's basic social thought.

Mill's investigations in social philosophy may be explained by the conditions of his personal life and by the stimulus of his social environment. Mill was, indeed, as John MacCunn points out, "nurtured by reformers to be a reformer."³ His father, James Mill, directed his early education into channels political and economic as well as classical; problems of legislation and social reform were matters of common discussion in the home of the elder Mill, and John's childhood was passed in the company of such men as Jeremy Bentham, David Ricardo, and Joseph Hume.⁴ When he was but fifteen years old the Benthamite Traité de Législation of Dumont fell into his hands, and proved to be a determining factor in his future career. "From the winter of 1821, when I first read Bentham, and especially from the commencement of the Westminster Review, I had what might truly be called an object in life; to be a reformer of the world."⁵ It was an ambition Mill never abandoned. Throughout his entire life, in his journalistic ventures, in his

¹In support of these generalizations beside J. L. and B. Hammond, *ibid.*, see also J. H. Clapham, Economic History of Modern Britain (Cambridge: The University Press, 1926), Vol. I, and C. R. Fay, Life and Labor in the Nineteenth Century (Cambridge: The University Press, 1920).

²Mill speaks of the year 1824 thus; "It was a time, as is known, of rapidly rising Liberalism . . . the tide began to set towards reform." Autobiography (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), p. 68 f.

³Six Radical Thinkers (London: Edward Arnold, 1910), p. 50.

⁴For accounts of Mill's childhood see especially his Autobiography, chap. I, Leslie Stephen, The English Utilitarians (London: Duckworth & Co., 1900), Vol. III, and Alexander Bain, John Stuart Mill: A Criticism (London: Longmans Green, 1882), chap. I.

⁵Autobiography, p. 93.

didactic writings on economic and political subjects, in his patronage of contemporary movements, and in his brief though not un-influential political career, Mill showed himself the constant advocate of social amelioration and institutional change. As early as 1825 he attends the debates of the Owenite Cooperative Society;¹ less than ten years later he is "actively engaged in defending important measures such as the great Poor Law Reform of 1834";² in 1845 he writes on "The Claims of Labor"; in 1859 "Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform." During his term in parliament (1865-1868) he greatly aided the passage of the Reform Bill of 1867, and in general thought it his "duty to come to the front in defence of advanced Liberalism on occasions when the obloquy to be encountered was such as most of the advanced Liberals in the House preferred not to incur."³ The last three years of his life were devoted to propagandizing for the Association for Land Tenure Reform.

In the Autobiography, Mill writes,

With those who like all the best and wisest of mankind, are dissatisfied with human life as it is, and whose feelings are wholly identified with its radical amendment, there are two main regions of thought. One is the region of ultimate aims; the constituent elements of the highest realizable ideal of human life. The other is that of the immediately useful and practically attainable.⁴

The above evidence has been presented to indicate Mill's interest in the latter region of thought. But was he equally interested in the region of ultimate aims? Clearly so, I think. An examination of his writings shows a considerable number of them to be

¹Bain, op. cit., p. 31.

²Autobiography, p. 135.

³Ibid., p. 201.

⁴p. 132.

concerned directly or indirectly, with moral theory.¹ This could be reasonably expected. The two men most responsible for his real education, and hence most influential in forming his fundamental opinions, were James Mill and Jeremy Bentham. Both Bentham and the elder Mill were reformers, "philosophical radicals." This meant that they were utilitarians, who took their moral theory seriously. So seriously in fact, that the very justification of the reforms which they advocated, was held to depend upon the assertion that they could be deduced directly from the principle of utility itself.² It is one of the contentions of this dissertation that a similarly close relationship existed between ethics and social practice in the opinion of John Stuart Mill.

Although Mill functioned both as ethicist and as advocate of leading reforms of the day, his self-estimate shows him playing a third role. Having distinguished the two extremes in the passage from the Autobiography quoted above, he continues, "My own strength lay wholly in the uncertain and slippery intermediate region, that of theory, or moral and political science." Actually, he was concerned with ethics, social theory, and practical reform alike.

Just here is the problem. It will not be denied that Mill's published works dealing with ethics, economics, and politics from 1822 to 1873, express great versatility, and that almost every type of social problem of the day, was at one time or another the subject of his inquiry. None can doubt the variety, but is there unity as well? Can it be said that beneath the welter of

¹These will be considered in some detail in the following chapter.

²It is instructive to note in this connection the essentially deductive procedure of both James Mill's Essay on Government, and Bentham's Principles of Morals and Legislation.

Mill's discursive writings is to be found the thread of some binding concept? Discrete and various as his works on social subjects are superficially seen to be, is there, implicit in them, a systematic social philosophy? My examination of Mill's writings has convinced me that there is, and that this unifying idea is that of a society to be economically and politically reconstructed in the light of a dominant moral aim.

I am not unaware of the difficulties attending such an interpretation. With the exception of such works as the Principles of Political Economy and the Representative Government, Mill's social writings are, taken individually, anything but systematic, and from a certain point of view are indeed antithetic to philosophic system-building. Partly this is due to Mill's journalistic style and his preoccupation with specific problems at particular times, but even more perhaps, to the content of his writing than to its form. System-building demands synthesis, assertion, consistency, whereas Mill's writing is sometimes analytic, tentative, and often inconsistent. System-building frequently demands a selectivity indistinguishable from narrowness, whereas Mill was so open-minded, and he was congenial to ideas having such divergent sources,¹ that a strict consistency could not be expected to pervade his writings. I have tried to do justice to this aspect of Mill without abandoning my conviction regarding the central role of reconstruction in his social thought. I have been at some pains to exhibit Mill's inconsistencies, and to refrain from doing violence to the content of his writings by forcing them within the confines of a pattern which they overflow. Yet, viewed broadly, his social philosophy does fall into a pattern, important

¹Some of his mentors were: Hume, Coleridge, Malthus, Fourier, Hartley, Comte, Carlyle, Bentham, Mrs. Taylor, Ricardo.

for a total grasp of his work though not always explicitly detailed in his individual essays. How explicate this pattern?

Speaking very roughly, there are two difficulties which may beset one interested in social reconstruction. One is the moral difficulty of not knowing the true goal of the reconstruction aimed at; the other is the adaptive difficulty of not knowing the methods requisite for achieving it. And it would seem that the solution of the first difficulty is logically prior to the solution of the second. The solution of the moral difficulty involves a consideration of the aims, intentions, and purposes of society in order to determine if these can be reduced to one fundamental end or value. The moral problem is thus the search for the social meaning of value; the attempt to validate a system of ethics. To this attempt, Mill devotes many pages. The solution of the adaptive difficulty is somewhat more complicated, for it not only presupposes that moral principles are acknowledged, but that there are further economic principles and political techniques in terms of which they may be applied. If the adaptive problem be interpreted very broadly to signify the search for economic principles, and the political techniques by which economic principles are made morally effective, then Mill is clearly as preoccupied with the adaptive problem as with the moral one.

This then, is the major pattern into which Mill's thought falls. In Mill's writings the general problem of the construction of an adequate society has three divisions, one ethical, one economic, one political. Each of the following chapters is to be devoted to Mill's treatment of one of these divisions.¹

¹The pattern which I have imposed upon Mill's social philosophy is logical, not chronological. He did not begin with ethics, pass on to economics, and conclude with politics. Still, I have not neglected chronology, but have confined it within the fields denoted by the chapter headings.

CHAPTER I

MILL'S ETHICAL DOCTRINE

Mill's Utilitarianism (1863) opens with the recognition of an impasse in moral philosophy; an impasse believed by Mill to be due to the confusion in the isolation of first principles. Such isolation is imperative, Mill seems to imply, if we are to construct a moral science, and this is the case because in ethics, intermediate theorems depend upon the initial axioms or definitions of the subject matter. In science, particulars come before general theory, whereas the very practical nature of morals or legislation demands the validation of general theory prior to making deductions therefrom. Mill states:

All action is for the sake of some end, and rules of action, it seems natural to suppose, must take their whole character and color from the end to which they are subservient. When we engage in a pursuit, a clear and precise conception of what we are pursuing would seem to be the first thing we need instead of the last we are to look forward to. A test of right and wrong must be the means, one would think, of ascertaining what is right or wrong and not a consequence of having already ascertained it.¹

This passage implies that ethics must begin with definition. Having initially defined the meaning of the terms right and wrong, it would be possible to subject alternative courses of action to definitional criteria so set up. The decision for action depends upon perception of the applicability of the definition to the case.²

¹John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Liberty, and Representative Government (Everyman ed.; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1929), p. 2.

²Ibid. ". . . . the morality of an individual action is not a question of direct perception, but of the application of a law to an individual case."

It might be admitted that definition must precede decision if moral philosophy is to be validly applied, and that ethical meaning must be explicated before ethical propositions can become meaningful, but this only pushes the problem back one step further; that is, it raises the question of establishing definitions. The necessity of constructing a science of ethics upon clear and distinct ideas is reasonable enough, but the methodological problem consists at least in part of acknowledging a technique for making our moral ideas clear and distinct. Prior, however, to considering Mill's ideas relative to the establishment of first principles or first definitions in ethics, it will be valuable to consider more specifically his ideas about the character of ethics as a science.

Properly speaking, for Mill, ethics is not a "science" but an "art." A science consists of factual or descriptive propositions whereas the propositions to be found in ethical texts are of a normative character.

The imperative mood is the characteristic of art as distinguished from science. Whatever speaks in rules or precepts, not in assertions respecting matters of fact, is art; and ethics or morality, is properly a portion of the art corresponding to the sciences of human nature and society.¹

The relation between art and science is the relation of practice to theory. The former can never legitimately be separated from the latter. Mill indicates carefully how art and science are aspects of a single enterprise. The passage is worthy of complete quotation.

The relation in which rules of art stand to doctrines of science may be thus characterized. The art proposes to itself an end to be attained, defines the end, and hands it over to the science. The science receives it, considers it as a phenomenon or effect to be studied, and having investigated its causes and conditions, sends it back to art with a

¹John Stuart Mill, A System of Logic (8th ed., New York: Harper & Bros., 1874), p. 653.

theorem of the combination of circumstances by which it could be produced. Art then examines these combinations of circumstances and according as any of them are or are not in human power, pronounces the end attainable or not. The only one of the premises which Art supplies, therefore, is the original major premise which asserts that the attainment of the given end is desirable. Science then lends to art the proposition (obtained by a series of inductions or of deductions) that the performance of certain actions will attain the end. From these premises Art concludes that the performance of these actions is desirable, and finding it also practicable, converts the theorem into a rule or precept.¹

It is clear at this point that Mill understands that any art is an engineering enterprise with work to be done and that the ethical art is essentially the same as the political. For, any prescription applicable to conduct must be based upon a scientific description of the social conditions of individual behavior. Practical ethics thus becomes equated with political engineering, and within this venture there is a division of labor corresponding to the problem of determining the ultimate value, of canvassing the economic and political principles necessary for realizing it, and constructing a concrete social policy.² To Mill, ethics was practical in that its results could be applied. There is a real relation between the recognition of an ultimate end and political practice; social policy may be rationally constructed only upon the explicit adoption of a scale of values.³

¹Ibid., pp. 653 f.

²This division of labor is made plain. "After framing the most comprehensive possible conception of the end to be aimed at, that is of the effect to be produced, and determining in the same comprehensive manner the set of conditions on which that effect depends, there remains to be taken a general survey of the resources which can be commanded for realizing this set of conditions and when the result of this survey has been embodied in the fewest and most extensive propositions possible those propositions will express the general relation between the available means and the end, and will constitute the general scientific theory of the art from which its practical methods will follow as corollaries." Ibid., p. 656.

³Upon the question as to whether theoretical ethics has practical bearing there is wide difference of opinion. Anderson Woods remarks in Time's Arrow in Society (Chicago: University of

What may be termed uniquely the ethical problem is that of establishing the ultimate end by means of which such a scale of values may be determined. The establishment of this ultimate end is the business of art and not of science for,

the definition of the end belongs exclusively to Art, and forms its peculiar province. Every art has one first principle or general major premise, not borrowed from science; that which enunciates the object aimed at, and affirms it to be a desirable object.¹

That part of art which discloses the hierarchy of values, Mill calls Teleology. The Utilitarianism is Mill's Teleology, and it is in this work that we must look for his general solution of the ethical problem.

Characterized with widest generality, Mill's Utilitarianism represents an attempt to defend utilitarianism which eventuates in its logical denial. Mill begins by accepting the positions on "convictional" grounds,² and, one by one, repudiates the foundations upon which a consistent and rational hedonism must rest. Ultimately, his position becomes not hedonistic but eudaemonistic, and the treatise takes on a distinctly Aristotelian flavor.³ It is the central thesis of this chapter that Mill's ethical theory is an

Chicago Press, 1936), p. 1, "Ethics is of no more dignity than a game like contract bridge unless it be of at least potential aid in the solution of practical problems." Contrariwise, Ernest Albee in A History of English Utilitarianism (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1902), p. 192, can say "The mistake of Bentham and his followers (Mill) was in assuming a logical relation between theoretical ethics proper and practical methods of government."

¹System of Logic, p. 656.

²For the meaning of "convictional" see infra pp. 15 f.

³See A. D. Lindsay's introduction to the Everyman edition of Mill's essay. Aristotelian elements are the following: (1) the doctrine that man is by nature a social being (2) the qualitative distinction among pleasures (3) the doctrine that happiness is not an abstract idea but a concrete whole with ingredients (4) the verdict that wise pleasures are those chosen by the wise man (5) the treatment of justice in terms of equality and legality.

effort to ground social policy upon principles derived through a method which he himself at one time held suspect, and that whereas Mill's theory is adequate in many respects, in certain others, it is questionable even to the extent of logical inconsistency.

Although in form Mill states the utilitarian position adequately, in spirit he diverges widely, and there is reason to believe that this divergence is due to a methodological error which Mill elsewhere takes pains to avoid.

It might be argued that problems of method in ethics reduce to two; the logical problem of a technique of moral reasoning, and the epistemological problem of the isolation and validation of first principles. From the last chapter of the System of Logic, I have drawn Mill's principles for the solution of the first; the issue of the methodological error of the essay on Utilitarianism raises the question of the second.

Mill believes that moral theory is to be founded on a single principle of universal applicability.

Whatever the standard is, there can be but one, for if there were several ultimate principles of conduct, the same conduct might be approved by one of these principles and condemned by another; and there would be needed some more general principle as umpire between them.¹

A parallel passage is to be found in the Utilitarianism:

. . . . there ought either to be some one fundamental principle or law at the root of all morality or if there be several, there should be a determinate order of precedence among them; and the one principle, or the rule for deciding between the various principles when they conflict, ought to be self-evident.²

The last phrase is peculiarly significant as setting the methodological difficulty of the essay. What does Mill mean by demanding that the first principle of morality be "self-evident"?

¹System of Logic, p. 658.

²p. 3.

In answer to this question there seem to be at least three possibilities. He may be maintaining (1) that this principle must be established intuitively, (2) that it is a definition and so self-evident in that its denial involves a logical contradiction, (3) that it is an empirical generalization of universal applicability. I shall consider these possibilities seriatim.

The question as to whether Mill believed that the self-evidence of the ethical first principle depended upon its intuitive establishment turns upon resolution of the ambiguity freighting the term "intuition." Intuition commonly signifies a method of knowing or understanding or recognizing. The fundamental question is, does it signify experiential and observational knowledge or pre-experiential and trans-experiential knowledge? As an empiricist Mill denies any knowledge independent of experience. "Intuition" in the latter sense would be definitely repudiated by him. On the other hand "intuitive" can refer to a particular kind of experiential knowledge -- namely that which is known directly or immediately as opposed to that which is known mediately or inferentially. This usage of the term occurs early in the System of Logic.¹ All first principles are in this sense of the word intuitive, and the ethical first principle is no exception. However, this by no means solves the difficulty. The question of intuitive establishment of principles is a question of origin -- the question of the self-evidence of these principles is a question of validity. The intuitive origin of principles does not guarantee their establishment. To accomplish the latter it is necessary to ask the

¹p. 19. "Truths are known to us in two ways: some are known directly and of themselves: some through the medium of other truths. The former are the subject of Intuition or Consciousness, the latter of Inference. The truths known by intuition are the original premises from which all others are inferred."

second question. Are first principles (admittedly intuitively derived) analytic or synthetic propositions, are they true by definition or probable by experience?

Although there is nowhere in Mill's writings specific consideration of the function of definition in ethics, his general remarks on definition¹ substantiate the hypothesis that for him the first principle of ethics is not an analytic proposition. Mill's nominalism leads him to emphasize the conventional character of the process of definition. Definitions, although resting upon secondary postulates of existence, are themselves completely verbal. That these propositions are self-evident is true in the sense that being analytic propositions, that is to say identities, their denial would involve self-contradiction. However, the first principle of ethics purports to say something not only about the arbitrary usage of words, but about the axiological character of the world. Definitional self-evidence is then irrelevant to the claims of moral theory to be valid.

The implied denial that the ethical first principle is either trans-experientially derived or merely a definition forces the conclusion that such self-evidence as it contains is due to its character as an empirical generalization of universal applicability. It is an axiom. As an axiom it has no other evidence than that of experience. The ground of belief in all axioms is their character of being "experimental truths, generalizations from observation."² They are analogous to Newton's law of gravitation -- "a class the most universal class of inductions from experience; the simplest and easiest cases of generalization from

¹Ibid., pp. 105-120.

²Ibid., p. 172.

the facts furnished us by our senses¹ That self-evidence which Mill demands for his single moral first principle² thus by the logic of his own philosophy of method turns out to be the qualified self-evidence of inductive observation. There is perhaps some justification for raising the issue whether such inductive observation could usefully be termed self-evidence at all. To raise this issue is to approach the methodological inconsistency underlying Mill's ethical system.

Stated in simplest terms, Mill in the System of Logic (1843) explicates a general method of inductive character which is to be applied to moral theory. In certain of his early essays, notably the "Bentham" dated 1838, and "Dr. Whewell on Moral Philosophy" published in 1852, he sharply criticized certain other moralists for failing to utilize the method set down in the System of Logic. But when in 1863 he systematized his own principles of moral theory in the Utilitarianism, he himself forsook the very methodological doctrine adumbrated in the System of Logic twenty years before.

Mill's ethical confusion hinges, as I have stated, upon the problem of the self-evidence of moral theory. It seems clear that the sense in which the term is employed in the System of Logic is Pickwickian. For, it is the very character of evidence to be external to, and other than that of which it is evidence. The term "self-evidence" may be interpreted psychologically or logically, and a confusion between these two meanings is responsible for the general failure of Mill's ethical theory to achieve consistency. On the psychological level a proposition is self-evident

¹Ibid., p. 187.

²Supra, p. 12.

when it is competent to cause belief. On the logical level a proposition has self-evidence proportional to its dependence upon evidence. Confusion occurs when mere competency to cause belief is accepted as the logical proof for a proposition -- that is to say, when beliefs are tested by the degree of conviction with which one asserts them, rather than by evidence lying outside the realm of belief itself.¹

That Mill understood the above distinction between using belief as a reason and finding a reason for belief, is clear from several passages from the System of Logic. The first occurs in his introductory attempt to define the subject and province of logic.

Logic is not the science of Belief but the science of Proof or Evidence. In so far as belief professes to be founded on proof, the office of logic is to supply a test for ascertaining whether or not the belief is well grounded. With the claims which any proposition has to belief on the evidence of consciousness -- that is without evidence in the proper sense of the word -- logic has nothing to do.²

The same point is even more clearly stated by Mill in the chapter dealing with the evidence for the Law of Universal Causation.

I must protest against adducing as evidence of the truth of a fact in external nature the disposition however strong or however general of the human mind to believe it. Belief is not proof, and does not dispense with the necessity of proof By evidence is not meant anything and everything which produces belief Evidence is not that which the mind does or must yield to, but that which it ought to yield to, namely that by yielding to which, its belief is kept conformable to fact.³

In ethics, as in science generally, belief does not con-

¹This confusion was termed "Convictionism" by the late Prof. James MacKaye and it will henceforth be so-named in these pages. A complete description of the fallacy may be found in Prof. MacKaye's article, "Convictionism vs. Non-Convictionism," International Journal of Ethics, XXXVIII (1928).

²System of Logic, p. 21.

³Ibid., pp. 398 f.

stitute evidence, and insofar as the self-evidence of an ethical proposition refers only to a deep conviction of its truth, such self-evidence does not constitute logical proof. Moral convictions and moral approbations do not demonstrate the rationality of the propositions believed and approved; in fact it is the rationality of the convictions and approbations themselves which must be demonstrated. This can be done only by assigning to them a determinate probability. We have seen that the conclusions of the System of Logic commit Mill to the empirical method, and this is true in ethics as well as in natural science. He himself distinguished clearly two schools of moral theorists, the intuitive and the inductive.¹ Believing himself and the utilitarians in general to belong to the latter, he directs constant attention to the dangers implicit in the intuitive method.

The notion that truths external to the mind may be known by intuition or consciousness, independently of observation and experience, is, I am persuaded in these times, the great intellectual support of false doctrines and bad institutions. By the aid of this theory, every inveterate belief and every intense feeling of which the origin is not remembered, is enabled to dispense with the obligation of justifying itself by reason, and is erected into its own all-sufficient voucher and justification. There never was such an instrument devised for consecrating all deep-seated prejudices.²

Mill is concerned to point out the dangerous character of "convictionism," not only from the point of view of theoretical speculation, but also in view of the relation of such speculation to concrete problems of social life. Mill was persuaded of the intensely practical nature of philosophy, and he thought he saw the direct relation of an erroneous method in moral philosophy to de-

¹Utilitarianism, p. 2. "According to the one opinion, the principles of morals are evident a priori, requiring nothing to command assent except that the meaning of the terms be understood. According to the other doctrine, right and wrong as well as truth and falsehood are questions of observation and experience"

²Autobiography (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), p. 158.

terioration and decay in the social process. He interpreted intuitionism as the natural prop of conservatism, and believed that only an empirical philosophy could serve as a basis for radical reform. He states;

Now the difference between these two schools of philosophy, that of Intuition, and that of Experience and Association; is not a mere matter of abstract speculation; it is full of practical consequences, and lies at the foundation of all the greatest differences of practical opinion in an age of progress. The practical reformer has continually to demand that changes be made in things which are supported by powerful and widely-spread feelings, or to question the apparent necessity and indefeasibleness of established facts; and it is often an indispensable part of his argument to show, how those powerful feelings had their origin and how those facts came to seem necessary and indefeasible. There is therefore a natural hostility between him and a philosophy which discourages the explanation of feelings and moral facts by circumstances and association and prefers to treat them as ultimate elements of human nature; a philosophy which is addicted to holding up favorite doctrines as intuitive truths, and deems intuition to be the voice of Nature and of God, speaking with an authority higher than that of our reason.¹

The distinction between intuitional and inductive schools of philosophy extends into the field of ethics. Here Mill asserts the need to justify moral approbations by reason. A relevant passage occurs in the last chapter of the System of Logic. Mill has been distinguishing propositions of existence from propositions of value. Propositions of value are, however, also propositions of existence in that they at least attest the existence of a feeling of approbation. But this feeling of approbation is not evidence of the rectitude of the value judgment.

The fact affirmed [i. e. in the value judgment] is that the conduct recommended exerts in the speaker's mind the feeling of approbation. This, however, does not go to the bottom of the matter; for the speaker's approbation is no sufficient reason why other people should approve, nor ought it to be a conclusive reason even to himself. For the purposes of practice every one must be required to justify his approbation . . .²

¹ Ibid., p. 191 f.

² System of Logic, p. 657.

Mill's clearest statement of this principle, and his sharpest criticism of the entire system of intuitional ethics comes in the early essay "Dr. Whewell on Moral Philosophy." Mill quite boldly sets the contrast between the ethical method of Bentham (whom he characterizes as the author of true method in moral science),¹ and the convictional method of Whewell and his school. Not an internal intuition, but an external standard is the test of ethical conclusions. The rightness of acts is not to be judged by the strength of the feelings of approval we have for them, but by their tendency to promote happiness. Neither individual nor group feelings of approval are self-justifying.² The chief court of appeal of all intuitionists is the domain of feeling. But feeling has no greater validity than thinking.

It seems to be tacitly supposed that however liable mankind are to be wrong in their opinions, they are generally right in their feelings, and especially in their antipathies. On the contrary there is nothing which it is more imperative that they should justify by reasons.³

Mill's attack upon an intuitionism which depends upon the uncritical acceptance of beliefs guaranteed by an internal standard, likewise implies an attack upon the individual conscience as an organ of moral infallibility. Conscience, the repository of belief par excellence, far from being itself a guide toward moral rectitude, is precisely that which itself needs guiding.

Although Mill's criticism of moral intuitionism entails

¹"Dr. Whewell on Moral Philosophy," Dissertations and Discussions (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1873), Vol. III, p. 144.

²"A feeling is not proved to be right and exempted from the necessity of justifying itself because the writer or speaker is not only conscious of it in himself, but expects to find it in other people; because instead of saying 'I,' he says, 'you and I'." Ibid., p. 153.

³Ibid., p. 181.

a criticism of the doctrine of conscience, his methodological confusion does not permit him to criticize conscience consistently. Thus he presents the puzzling example of a critic of convictionism who is occasionally himself a convictionist; of a critic of the ultimacy of moral feeling who himself at times appeals to the ultimacy of moral feeling. This paradoxical situation is nowhere more clearly displayed than in Mill's essay "Bentham" of 1838.

In this essay, at once eulogistic and critical, Mill shows to what extent his thought has been influenced by Bentham, and at the same time the degree to which he has been led to diverge from Bentham's doctrines. Throughout, runs his admiration for Bentham's essential contribution to ethics; a method patterned upon that of the natural sciences. Mill believes that Bentham first introduced the scientific habit of thought into morals and politics.¹ He also believes that this scientific habit of thought means the repudiation of moral convictionism and the acceptance of an ethics of consequences. Says Mill,

Whether happiness be or be not the end to which morality should be referred, that it be referred to an end of some sort and not left in the dominion of vague feeling or inexplicable internal conviction, that it be made a matter of reason and calculation, and not merely of sentiment, is essential to the very idea of moral philosophy: is, in fact, what renders argument or discussion on moral questions possible.²

But having repudiated "vague feeling" and "inexplicable internal conviction," Mill, in the same essay, proceeds to criticize Bentham severely for not himself utilizing the doctrine of conscience; that is to say, the doctrine of "vague feeling" and "inexplicable internal conviction." He finds it curious that recognition of conscience is absent from all of Bentham's writings, exclaiming with some surprise and reproach, "The feeling of moral

¹Dissertations and Discussions, Vol. I, p. 364.

²Ibid., pp. 410 f.

approbation or disapprobation properly so called he (Bentham) seems unaware of the existence of."¹ This inconsistency is indicative of the uncertain fashion in which Mill criticizes "convictionism."

I have inserted this somewhat extended account of Mill's ethical method because without some knowledge of the confusion which pervades his theory, it is impossible to judge his ethical suggestions. I have attempted to defend the thesis that whereas Mill states admirably the traditional position of utilitarian ethics, the convictional confusion into which he occasionally falls serves to weaken his ethical analysis. Now it can be shown that Mill's efforts to codify utilitarian ethics are based upon the desire to draw up the preliminary blue prints for a program of social reform, and to make eminently clear the ethical presuppositions of a planned society. Therefore, if he has failed to solve the ethical problem, does it follow that he has failed as well to point the way toward an adequate society? I think not. Mill's ethics contains the seeds of a truly rational analysis of ultimate human needs, and as such seems to merit not abandonment but purification. This will be the task of the following pages.

Apart from the few introductory remarks which comprise its first chapter, Mill's Utilitarianism contains four chief sections. The first, entitled "What Utilitarianism Is" is expository of the general position, and attempts to define the terms right, pleasure, and happiness and to explain the relationship between motives and ethical judgment. The second deals with the problem of ultimate sanctions; and, although Mill's use of the word is somewhat ambiguous, an attempt is made to explain how the utilitarian principle may make a claim upon choice. The third discussion treats of the

¹Ibid., p. 384.

logical and epistemological difficulties in the way of ethical proof, and thus refers back to the problem of method raised in the System of Logic. The final discussion raises the issue of the relation between utility and justice.

Mill begins his explanation of the meaning of utilitarianism with a clear statement.

The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness pain and the privation of pleasure.¹

Having stated that "pleasure and freedom from pain are the only things desirable as ends," Mill proceeds to defend this doctrine from the charge of animalism which has been the recurring criticism of epicurean ethics. To do so he assigns to intellect and moral sentiment superior rank in the scale of pleasures. Although a utilitarian might make this assignment on the basis of considerations such as permanence, freedom from pain, and an application of the principle of diminishing returns of pleasure, Mill is not satisfied to do this. He insists that mental pleasures differ from bodily in being intrinsically better. "It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognize the fact that some kinds of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others."² The introduction of a qualitative distinction raises the problem of the criterion of choice between pleasures. Just at this point Mill himself seems to be guilty of the fallacy of "convictionism." For just here principle of choice becomes merely that of individual preference.

Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all

¹Utilitarianism, p. 6.

²Ibid., p. 7.

who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure.¹

Mental pleasures have a superior quality because, as Aristotle claimed, the exercise of the rational faculty is intrinsically better than that of lesser faculties of soul. As the characteristic human activity, thinking is superior to bodily satisfaction, and Socrates in pain is more worthy of existence than a sensually satisfied pig.² Pleasures differing in quality may be distinguished, although this demands a knowledge which is subtle and perhaps difficult of achievement. But in any case in which the quality of two respective pleasures is in question, the ultimate decision rests with the man of wisdom and judgment.

The consequences of Mill's qualitative distinction between pleasures has been pointed out repeatedly; it is a commonplace that such a distinction ultimately involves the repudiation of the utilitarian theory of ethics.³ Utilitarianism as a system of teleological ethics asserts that choice between alternative courses of action should be guided by a consideration of the tendency of such alternatives to produce a maximum amount of pleasure. Qualitative variation of pleasure seems to destroy the commensurability of values, and thus the possibility of basing choice upon a calculus. The qualitative distinction makes moral choice depend ultimately upon the very intuition or moral sense which Mill was initially interested in discrediting. It makes moral choice a matter of direct perception which cannot be explained, and dignifies convictionism by terming it the highest exercise of man's

¹Ibid., p. 8.

²Ibid., p. 9.

³See G. E. Moore, Principia Ethica (Cambridge: University Press, 1929), Sec. 48.

rational faculty.

According to Mill, actions are right as they produce a maximum quantity of pleasure, and this maximum is calculated with reference to the entire realm of sentience.¹ Since the only good is pleasure, and the only evil pain, states of consciousness alone have moral relevance. Kant was mistaken. Morality is not the product of human participation in an intelligible world of pure reason, but on the contrary, it depends upon the conditions of sensation alone. In the experience of choice, a reason for an act can only be evidence that the act involves a maximization of total happiness.

This doctrine of Mill serves to raise the important problem of egoism versus altruism. It is not uncommon for individuals to seek their own happiness, but utilitarianism is a philosophy not of individual, but of social gratification.

The happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is right in conduct is not the agent's own happiness, but that of all concerned. As between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator.²

This demand for disinterest, which enjoins a man to judge the goodness of actions by their total effects on the happiness of humanity and which has been called by Henry Sidgwick "the principle of rational benevolence,"³ is axiomatic for utilitarianism.⁴ Mill

¹Utilitarianism, p. 11.

²Ibid., p. 16.

³Henry Sidgwick, The Methods of Ethics (London: Macmillan & Co., 1922), p. 389.

⁴Almost all successors of Mill have conceded that the duty of choosing the general good in preference to individual pleasure is axiomatic in those cases where the two conflict. Sidgwick has indicated that at this point the foundation for the principle is intuitional. Following Sidgwick, G. E. Moore says, "It seems to me quite self-evident that it must always be our duty to do what will produce the best effects upon the whole, no matter how bad

is aware of the practical difficulties which lie in the way of applying such a principle -- but advises that in order to further a concrete social program, the attempt must be made. This attempt would include a manipulation of social institutions with the aim of establishing an identity of interest between society and the individual. The natural conflict of interests would be resolved by using law and social arrangements to identify them.¹

Mill's statement that the common good is the final criterion of the value of actions, and that the end of society is the production of a maximum quantity of pleasure involves a distinction between the morality of actions and the morality of agents. Thus on the scale of value, actions are primary, and agents morally important because of the type of action for which they are responsible. A good will possesses merely instrumental value, and virtue itself is not intrinsically good, but has as its object the multiplication of happiness.² It is true, Mill would hold that there is an important relation between the consequences of an action and the motive responsible for it, but the reward and punishment of motive has social utility only when it brings about an increase in the valuable consequences of actions. One of Mill's contributions to a definition of the end of society is the doctrine of the ultimate status of pleasure and the relative status of virtue.³

Mill concludes the discussion of the meaning of Utili-

the effects upon ourselves may be and no matter how much good we ourselves may lose by it." Ethics (New York: Henry Holt & Co., Home University Library), p. 232. The first recognition of the difficulty in Mill of passing from the fact of personal selfishness to the ideal of altruistic philanthropy known to me is found in Thomas Rawson Birks, Modern Utilitarianism (London: Macmillan & Co., 1874), p. 238 f.

¹Utilitarianism, p. 16.

²Ibid., p. 17. See also the discussion in Autobiography, p. 163.

³As in Utilitarianism, p. 18, and System of Logic, p. 658.

tarianism by emphasizing that it is basically an ethics of consequences and so a morality to be applied by a method of calculation. Moral reflection only arises because of the necessity of making choices, and the utilitarian principle provides evidence for making a choice between alternative lines of conduct. "If the principle of utility is good for anything, it must be good for weighing . . . conflicting utilities against one another and marking out the region within which one or the other preponderates."¹

Because utilitarianism implied a hedonistic calculus it was the object of sharp criticism by one of Mill's contemporaries, Dr. Whewell. He asserted that although utilitarianism ideally bases its calculus upon the total effect of an act upon sentient creation, actually the time element would prevent any calculation from being complete.² Mill's reply is that this is true but irrelevant.³ It is obviously impossible that all consequences could be calculated, but this does not vitiate the theory. No moral choice can be said to be based upon certainty. But although certainty does not exist, evidence in terms of probability does, and a moral choice based upon relevant evidence is all that any theory could demand. Further, the problem of choice as it arises is never completely novel. In making ethical decisions, the past always contributes the accumulated wisdom of social living. As a result, the excessive generality of the utilitarian first principle and the particularity of any conduct situation is mediated by certain secondary principles. In this respect all ethical codes are similar. "Whatever we adopt as the fundamental principle of morality, we require subordinate principles to apply it by; the impossibility

¹Utilitarianism, p. 21.

²Dissertations and Discussions, III, p. 155.

³Ibid., pp. 155 ff.

of doing without them being common to all systems"¹

These subordinate principles may be of two kinds, (1) universal rules which are merely deductions from the code of utility, and (2) general rules which are inductions from experience.² These general rules are merely tentative. They represent successive approximations in the application of the universal rule. Mill's empiricism causes him to stress the provisional and perfectible nature of general moral rules; to hypostatize such principles is a primary error in moral philosophy.³

The distinction between the ultimate principle of a moral theory and the subordinate principles involved in its application raises the question of the importance of the former. Mill is not completely consistent on this point. In the essay "Dr. Whewell on Moral Philosophy," Mill praises Bentham for constructing secondary principles.

With him, the first use to be made of his ultimate principle was to erect on it as a foundation, secondary or middle principles, capable of serving as premises for a body of ethical doctrine not derived from existing opinions, but fitted to be their test. Without such middle principles, an universal principle, either in science or in morals, serves for little but a thesaurus of commonplaces for the discussion of questions, instead of a means of deciding them.⁴

Mill does not explain clearly the relation between the first principle of morality and the middle principles, and the question might be raised whether the latter are deduced from the former, or depend upon intermediate scientific knowledge. Suggestions derivable from the treatment of method in the System of Logic

¹Utilitarianism, p. 23.

²"One should always choose the greater good of another to one's own lesser good" would be a universal rule. "Do not tell a lie" would be a general rule.

³Utilitarianism, p. 22. System of Logic, p. 655.

⁴Dissertations and Discussions, III, 143.

seem to commit Mill to the latter alternative. If this is true, emphasis upon a first principle of ethics is largely misdirected. In the "Bentham" Mill criticizes Bentham precisely because his statement of the greatest happiness principle is too vague and general for practical application.

. . . . while under proper explanations, we entirely agree with Bentham in his principle, we do not hold with him that all right thinking on the details of morals depends on its express assertion. We think utility, or happiness much too complex and indefinite an end to be sought except through the medium of various secondary ends, concerning which there may be and often is, agreement among persons who differ in their ultimate standard¹

It is possible for individuals to be morally righteous without being utilitarians, and it is more important that they agree upon proximate than ultimate ends. Fortunately, this is the case. "As mankind are much more nearly of one nature than of one opinion about their own nature, they are more easily brought to agree in their intermediate principles than in their first principles."² On the other hand, although all conduct situations involve secondary principles, appeal to the first principle is occasioned by the conflicting claims of these secondary ones.

Those who adopt utility as a standard, can seldom apply it truly except through the secondary principles; those who reject it, generally do no more than erect those secondary principles into first principles. It is when two or more of the secondary principles conflict that a direct appeal to some first principle becomes necessary; and then commences the practical importance of the utilitarian controversy: which is in other respects, a question of arrangement and logical subordination rather than of practice; important principally in a purely scientific point of view, for the sake of the systematic unity and coherency of ethical philosophy.³

From a consideration of its meaning, Mill passes on to the

¹Ibid., I, 409.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 410. Also "We must remember that only in these cases of conflict between secondary principles, is it requisite that first principles should be appealed to," Utilitarianism, p. 24.

problem of the ultimate sanction of the principle of utility. The section of the Utilitarianism which deals with this question is ambiguous.¹ The ambiguity lies in the word sanction. As Mill himself says, the sanction of a moral standard may mean "(1) what are the motives to obey it and (2) whence does it derive its binding force?"² However, for Mill these meanings are equivalent. But it seems to be the case that sanction can have two meanings, depending upon whether the term is used descriptively or normatively, and there is reason to believe that Mill confuses these two meanings. At times, he appears to be applying the term sanction descriptively, that is to say, giving an empirical account of motivation, at others to be applying it normatively, and thus giving an intuitive account of validity. Inspiration for the first enterprise derives from Bentham.

For Bentham, a sanction is a means for the enforcement of imperatives. The end of society is the happiness of the state as a whole, but individuals are egoistic as to motive. Duty and interest are by nature opposed, but their reconciliation is necessary if the ethical ideal is to be realized. This reconciliation may be accomplished by the social engineer or the legislator.³ Sanctions are imposed by the guardians of society for the purpose of subordinating inclination to the dictates of the rational good, and in

¹Henry Sidgwick points out the confusing nature of this chapter, op. cit., p. 499, n.

²Utilitarianism, p. 24.

³Sidgwick too, held that this reconciliation depended not upon logic but psychology. ". . . most Utilitarians however anxious they have been to convince men of the reasonableness of aiming at happiness generally, have not commonly sought to attain this result by any logical transition from the Egoistic to the Universalistic principle. They have relied almost entirely on the Sanctions of Utilitarian rules; that is on the pleasures gained or pains avoided by the individual conforming to them." Op. cit., p. 498.

this attempt pleasure and pain may be utilized coercively by the legislator.

. . . . the happiness of the individuals of whom a community is composed, that is their pleasures and their security is the end and the sole end which the legislator ought to have in view; the sole standard in conformity to which each individual ought, as far as depends upon the legislator, to be made to fashion his behavior. But whether it be this or anything else that is to be done, there is nothing by which a man can ultimately be made to do it, but either pain or pleasure.¹

Sanctions are imposed externally, and are of four kinds, physical, political, moral, and religious.²

The source of Mill's enquiry concerning sanctions is Bentham, but the spirit is other than Benthamite. Mill, also influenced by German philosophy, more particularly the moral theory of Kant,³ emphasizes not the moral sanctions imposed socially and externally, but those originating internally in conscience. The duty of acting for the common good need not have external enforcement; it finds an internal guarantee in the approving and disapproving faculty itself.

The internal sanction of duty, whatever our standard of duty may be, is one and the same -- a feeling in our own mind, a pain more or less intense, attendant on violation of duty, which in properly cultivated moral natures rises in the more serious cases into shrinking from it as an impossibility. This feeling when disinterested and connecting itself with the pure idea of duty, and not with some particular form of it, or with any of the merely accessory circumstances, is the essence of Conscience.⁴

The Benthamite denial of conscience would appeal to an individual primarily concerned with the outward aspects of social reform. But to Mill, profoundly interested in personal psychology

¹Bentham, Principles of Morals and Legislation (Oxford: 1907), p. 24.

²Ibid., p. 25.

³He speaks of Kant as "this remarkable man, whose system of thought will long remain one of the landmarks in the history of philosophical speculation" Utilitarianism, p. 4.

⁴Ibid., p. 26.

and the "internal culture of the individual,"¹ external sanctions alone seemed insufficient. They provide too loose a framework of order. Legal and social sanctions prove defective because human beings oppose socially enforced codes of morality with personal codes seeming to spring from the depths of personality. Sidgwick has said, and Mill would have agreed, "It seems impossible to affirm that the external sanctions of men's legal duties will always be sufficient to identify duty with interest."² Conscience, on the other hand, has psychological ultimacy, and morality which seems to originate in the self is strongly persuasive. It is this fact which finally causes Mill to call conscience the sanction par excellence of social ethics.

The ultimate sanction, therefore of all morality being a subjective feeling in our own minds, I see nothing embarrassing to those whose standard is utility, in the question, what is the sanction of that particular standard? We may answer, the same as of all other moral standards -- the conscientious feelings of mankind the feelings exist, a fact in human nature, the reality of which, and the great power with which they are capable of acting on those in whom they have been duly cultivated, are proved by experience.³

Although Mill asserts the importance of conscience, he denies the formalist arguments for its objectivity. Conscience is not a transcendental fact testifying to man's participation in an intelligible world. Mill agrees with Locke that moral feelings are not innate, but arise in experience and that the moral faculty may have a natural history.⁴

There is a further sanction for utilitarian morality. This is the existence of altruistic sentiments. Men are not exclusively egoistic, but have social impulses. These serve as the

¹Autobiography, p. 100.

²Op. cit., p. 167.

³Utilitarianism, p. 26 f.

⁴Ibid., p. 28.

"natural basis of sentiment for utilitarian morality." Thus utilitarianism has a strong natural foundation.

This firm foundation is that of the social feelings of mankind; the desire to be in unity with our fellow creatures which is already a powerful principle in human nature and happily one of those which tend to become stronger.¹

Individual and society, self and others, are polar concepts. Man is a social animal.

The social state is at once so natural, so necessary, and so habitual to man that, except in some unusual circumstances, or by an effort of voluntary abstraction, he never conceives himself otherwise than as a member of a body; and this association is riveted more and more as mankind are further removed from the state of savage independence.²

Social living requires the development of cooperative enterprise and all cooperative enterprise re-inforces the sympathetic sentiments of human beings. Mill not only insists that the self must be defined in terms of the social organism, but agrees with Comte that history exhibits a progressive development of human sociality. The social feelings are constantly developed so that finally

the deeply rooted conception which every individual has even now of himself as a social being, tends to make him feel it one of his natural wants that there should be harmony between his feelings and aims and those of his fellow creatures . . . this conviction is the ultimate sanction of the greatest happiness morality.³

It seems clear that in his treatment of sanctions, Mill goes far beyond Bentham. Whereas Bentham had been interested primarily in external sanctions, Mill discusses the internal sanction duty almost exclusively. Further, whereas Bentham conceived of society as an aggregate of individuals, Mill here pictures the social structure as an organic unity. Mill enlarges Bentham's egoistic account of motivation by accepting the doctrine that sym-

¹Utilitarianism, p. 29.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 31.

pathy too is a natural sentiment.

At the beginning of the section on sanctions, it was suggested that Mill's treatment suffered from ambiguity. The ambiguity is found to lie in the two possible meanings of the term, that of (1) psychological motive, or (2) ethical proof. The above discussion interprets Mill as meaning (1), since this is more within the utilitarian tradition, and because it would lead to less serious difficulties. For, insofar as Mill's treatment of sanctions is a proof for utilitarianism, it is "convictional" in nature. In making utilitarianism depend upon the feeling of duty, the dictates of conscience, or social feelings, Mill would be taking as a guide precisely those things which should themselves be guided. Subjective feeling, as Mill himself has pointed out, is the basis of an intuitional morality, but not one which is empirical.

The section in the Utilitarianism dealing with sanctions yields a dilemma. Mill is either attempting to validate the theory, or to describe empirically the motives commonly existing which tend to enforce it. The first attempt is inconsistent with Mill's own refutation of convictionism, the second suffers from partiality in excluding a treatment of external sanctions.

From sanctions Mill turns to an enquiry concerning the possibility of proving the principle of utility. It seems that the principle is incapable of deductive proof, since there are no ethical premises more ultimate than itself.¹ However, this is not the only meaning of proof.

If then it is asserted that there is a comprehensive formula, including all things which are in themselves good, and that whatever else is good, is not so as an end, but as a mean, the formula may be accepted or rejected but is not a subject of what is commonly understood by proof. We are not however, to infer that its acceptance or rejection must depend on blind

¹Ibid., pp. 4, 32.

impulse or arbitrary choice. There is a larger meaning of the word proof in which this question is as amenable to it as any other of the disputed questions of philosophy. The subject is within the cognisance of the rational faculty; and neither does that faculty deal with it solely in the way of intuition. Considerations may be presented capable of determining the intellect either to give or withhold its assent to the doctrine; this is equivalent to proof.¹

Because the principle of utility is neither a definition nor a principle established deductively from definitions, it is not a certainty. Being an axiom, and hence, capable only of substantiation through inductive evidence,² it can at best be given probability of a high order. But the fact that it can be established on the basis of evidence, makes its acceptance non-arbitrary. Since it depends upon probability it is a matter for rational consideration.

It remains to consider how Mill seeks to establish the principle of utility. His notorious statement that since the only proof of the visibility of an object is that people see it, the only proof that something is desirable is that people actually desire it, has been ridiculed by succeeding moralists. So much so that any core of truth in his argument has been practically obscured.

It is evident that the term "desirable" has two connotations, (1) "capable of being desired" and (2) "source of a real moral obligation,"³ and thus that the analogy which Mill employs is untenable. It is further true that the statement "No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable except that each person so far as he believes it to be attainable desires his own

¹Ibid., p. 4.

²Supra, pp. 14 f.

³This is pointed out by G. E. Moore, Principia Ethica, sec. 40, and Henry Sidgwick, op. cit., p. 388, n.

happiness,"¹ raises serious difficulties.² The individual is no guarantor of the group. "That each person's happiness is a good to that person and the general happiness, therefore a good to the aggregate of all persons,"³ is incorrect precisely because the aggregate referred to, if it does consider the general happiness a good, does so distributely rather than collectively.

Of the statements of Mill quoted, it has been claimed that they confuse the existential realm with the axiological. Henry Sidgwick has pointed this out conclusively in making the distinction between ethical and psychological hedonism.⁴ Successive moralists have attacked this confusion of Mill's in two different ways. In the first place they have shown like Sidgwick himself that there is no necessary connection between psychological and ethical hedonism, and in the second place they have denied the truth of the former.⁵

It seems that Mill's confusion of the desired and the desirable is out of harmony with his own theory since conduciveness to pleasure is precisely that which might permit a choice between them. Nonetheless, shorn of certain of its logical errors, the nature of Mill's proof is simple. It is a proof which purports to be an invitation to observation. "If the end which the utilitarian doctrine proposes to itself were not in theory and in practice acknowledged to be an end, nothing could ever convince any

¹Utilitarianism, p. 32 f.

²Sidgwick, for example, points out the gap between the doctrines of egoistic and universalistic hedonism which he only seems able to bridge intuitionally. See op. cit., pp. 162-176, 498-508, et passim.

³Utilitarianism, p. 33.

⁴Op. cit., pp. 40 ff.

⁵Cf., G. E. Moore, Principia Ethica, sec. 41.

person that it was so."¹ The proof of the ethical first principle lies ultimately in an examination of meanings derived from experience of moral phenomena. To the question, what is the end of man? Mill would answer, "that which one's own meanings disclose." It is a question which is answerable only through introspection and observation. The proof for the principle can never be direct but must always be indirect. In this respect the principle of utility is analogous to the principle of contradiction. Aristotle has pointed out in the Metaphysics² that the principle of contradiction cannot be directly established but that its validity is indirectly established by consideration of the logical embarrassment involved in its denial. One type of indirect proof for the theory of utility, is the fact that when compared to alternative ethical systems it is found to have a degree of generality and self-consistency which they lack. Other systems tend to over-emphasize some secondary principle of morality and give it preeminent status.³

The second indirect proof for the principle of utility is the fact that an examination of the work of moralists not utilitarians indicates that they are groping toward the theory even when they appear to reject it. Mill says,

Although the non-existence of an acknowledged first principle has made ethics not so much a guide as a consecration of men's actual sentiments, still, as men's sentiments both of favor and aversion are greatly influenced by what they suppose to be the effects of things upon their happiness, the principle of utility has had a large share in forming the moral doctrines even of those who most scornfully reject its authority I might go much further and say that to all those a priori moralists who deem it necessary to argue at all, utili-

¹Mill, Utilitarianism, p. 32.

²Aristotle, Metaphysica, trans. W. D. Ross (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1928), 1006a.

³Utilitarianism, p. 24.

tarian arguments are indispensable.¹

The last section of the Utilitarianism is entitled "On the Connection Between Justice and Utility." This section of the essay is particularly important, as an attempt to relate certain intermediate axioms to the ethical first principle. Thus it provides tentative elucidation of the relationship between ethics and politics. However, Mill's motive in relating justice and utility is primarily defensive. From earliest times the concept of justice has been a basic term in ethical analysis. Also it had frequently been assumed that this concept was different from if not actually antagonistic to the principle of utility. "In all ages of speculation, one of the strongest obstacles to the reception of the doctrine that Utility or Happiness is the criterion of right and wrong, has been drawn from the idea of Justice."² It is the reality of this supposed opposition which Mill wishes to investigate.

The first characteristic of the concept of justice which Mill notes is the fact that it has historically been thought to signify a quality implicit in nature. Justice like G. E. Moore's "good" has been deemed a simple and undefinable quality, recognized only through the exercise of intuition. As Mill points out:

The powerful sentiment and apparently clear perception which that word (justice) recalls with a rapidity and certainty resembling an instinct, have seemed to the majority of thinkers to point out an inherent quality in things: to show that the Just must have an existence in Nature as something absolute.³

"Justice" is essentially a sentiment or natural feeling, but no matter how compelling it may seem to the individual, it, as any other instinct, is subjective, and may need to be "controlled and enlightened by a higher reason."

¹Utilitarianism, p. 3.

³Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 38.

Granting that the feeling of justice possesses the defects of subjectivity, what, Mill asks, is the objective reality which corresponds to this feeling? At this point Mill begins an empirical survey of the various types of content habitually given to the concept of justice. His survey discloses the attributes of justice to be five in number. Stated negatively injustice consists in (1) the violation of legal rights, (2) withholding that to which an individual has a moral right, (3) forcing an individual to undergo undeserved evils, (4) breach of contract express or implied, and (5) being partial in matters to which favor and preference do not properly apply or, failing to apply the principle of equality.¹ Although each of these meanings has at some time been applied to justice, there is no general agreement in the application of these meanings to concrete issues. Men agree that justice implies equality, but they do not agree upon what constitutes equality in actual cases. Equality varies in terms of whether it is meted out in aristocratic, democratic, or communist society; and as Mill states, "the sense of natural justice may be plausibly appealed to in behalf of everyone of these opinions."² The vagueness of the concept of natural justice and the variations in its application are prima facie evidences that some standard other than justice itself is the real standard to which appeal is made.

The plurality of meanings found for the term justice leads Mill to attempt to define the concept. Examining the notions of legality, of penal sanction,³ and of obligation, Mill concludes

¹Ibid., pp. 40 ff.

²Ibid., p. 43.

³Apropos of punishment, Mill believes "that this distinction lies at the bottom of the notions of right and wrong; that we call any conduct wrong . . . according as we think that the person ought or ought not to be punished for it." Ibid., p. 45. If

that "justice implies something which it is not only right to do and wrong not to do, but which some individual person can claim from us as his moral right wherever there is a right, the case is one of justice."¹ The concept of a right implies (1) the individual possessing the right, (2) the individual against whom the right is urged, (3) a social matrix within which the relationship of obligation can exist. Rights are possessed and exercised by individuals, but they are guaranteed by society; morality and legality are functions of the social structure, and can only exist within the limits of organized community. Justice consists in the respecting of rights but those rights are not defined by justice, but by the principle of utility.

To have a right then, is I conceive to have something which society ought to defend me in the possession of. If the objector goes on to ask why it ought, I can give him no other reason than general utility.²

It would appear then, that justice is by no means an ultimate principle but one which depends upon the principle of utility. The chief evidence for this is the lack of consistency in the application of the standard of justice, and the fundamental lack of agreement upon its meaning.

If justice be totally independent of utility, and be a standard per se, which the mind can recognize by simple introspection of itself, it is hard to understand why that internal oracle is so ambiguous, and why so many things appear either just or unjust, according to the light in which they are regarded We are continually informed that Utility is an uncertain standard which every different person interprets differently, and that there is no safety but in the immutable, ineffaceable and unmistakable dictates of Justice, which carry their evidence in themselves and are independent of the fluctuations of opinion. One would suppose from this that on questions of

by this Mill thinks that "wrong" means "that which ought to be punished" his statement does not follow from the Utilitarian position.

¹Ibid., pp. 46 f.

²Ibid., p. 50.

justice there could be no controversy; that if we take that for our rule, its application to any given case could leave us in as little doubt as a mathematical demonstration. So far is this from being the fact, that there is as much difference of opinion and as much discussion about what is just as about what is useful to society. Not only have different nations and individuals different notions of justice, but in the mind of one and the same individual justice is not some one rule, principle, or maxim, but many which do not always coincide in their dictates, and in choosing between which, he is guided by some extraneous standard, or by his own personal predilections.¹

Mill chooses to illustrate the ambivalence of the concept of justice² by applying it to three real problems which confront society, (1) the problem of punishment, (2) the problem of economic distribution of profits, and (3) the problem of the incidence of taxation. In the first case it is suggested (1) that punishment is to reform the individual criminal, (2) that it is to prevent ill to others, or (3) that since circumstances are responsible for crimes, it is not right to punish at all. The first alternative is suggested by the principle that individuals are not to be sacrificed for the benefit of others, the second by the principle that society may act in its own self-defence, and the third by the principle that one should not be punished for that for which he is not responsible. These principles seem valid though mutually conflicting and as long as each is thought to originate in an absolute dictate of natural justice, choice between them must be arbitrary.

In the second case, that of economic distribution, a like situation prevails. Whether in industrial enterprise (1) superior skill should warrant superior remuneration, or (2) the less efficient are deserving of equal remuneration if doing their utmost, depends upon whether one reads the principle of justice in terms of absolute or proportionate equality. From the point of view of justice alone no rational criterion of choice is admissible. The

¹Ibid., p. 51.

²Ibid., pp. 51 ff.

same is true in regard to the last case, that of distribution of the burden of taxation. It may be argued (1) that taxation should be directly proportionate to pecuniary means, (2) that taxation should be graduated so that the burden falls primarily upon the higher income groups, or (3) that a certain fixed sum should be levied on all since all reap equal civic benefits. A different meaning of justice may be appealed to in each of the three instances, and here again the autonomy of each meaning prohibits the possibility of compromise.

Each of the three situations outlined illustrates what might be termed the moral antinomy of natural justice. In each case an equally valid principle is the source of the appeal. But how can the antinomy be resolved? The answer to this question requires the institution of a "Copernican Revolution" in moral philosophy, for it involves the subordination of the principle of justice. Belief that the principle of utility has validity only within the limits defined by natural justice must be abandoned for the statement that the principle of natural justice has validity only within the limits defined by the principle of utility. Only in these terms can the antinomies of natural justice be resolved.

It must not be assumed that the mere subordination of the principle of justice to the principle of utility solves all problems connected with punishment, profit sharing, and taxation. In fact it may be true that the change only shifts the form in which the difficulties re-assert themselves. But such re-allocation of the problems at the very least places them in a position whereby the answer is not arbitrary, but dependent upon evidence, however difficult to gather and appraise. To say that the question whether taxation should be directly proportional, graduated, or absolutely

fixed, depends not upon an intuition of justice, but upon expectation for production of the greatest total of happiness for society, does not answer the question, but at least puts it in answerable form.

The shift in the status of natural justice by no means results in its abandonment.

While I dispute the pretensions of any theory which sets up an imaginary standard of justice not grounded on utility, I account the justice which is grounded on utility to be the chief part and incomparably the most sacred and binding part of all morality. Justice is a name for certain classes of moral rules which concern the essentials of human well-being more nearly, and are therefore of more absolute obligation than any other rules for the guidance of life; and the notion which we have found to be of the essence of the idea of justice, that of a right residing in an individual, implies and testifies to this more binding obligation.¹

The formulation of principles of justice must depend upon experience of the facts of social living. Interpreted thus, it is not difficult to understand the actual content given to rules of justice. Legality has always been associated with justice, not because there is something intrinsically good in acting according to law, but because in general the evidence seems to suggest that a greater amount of social good can be derived from obeying law than from disobeying it. In the same way it has been held just that good motives should be rewarded. Here, too, it must be recognized that the imperative is not a categorical one. Motives are not the most significant thing about conduct, although consequences are. None the less, there is an important relationship between good motives and useful acts. Although it is not true without exceptions, useful acts are more likely to be committed from good motives than from bad. Since good motives tend to produce good actions, good motives can usefully be encouraged by reward. But the reward of good motives and the punishment of bad are alike

¹Ibid., p. 55.

just, not because justice is an absolute principle, but because reward and punishment have a determinate social utility.

The same would seem to hold for the idea of equality. Mill, however, gives this aspect of justice a special emphasis.

If it is a duty to do to each according to his deserts, returning good for good as well as repressing evil by evil, it necessarily follows that we should treat all equally well (when no higher duty forbids) who have deserved equally well of us, and that society should treat all equally well who have deserved equally well of it, that is, who have deserved equally absolutely. This is the highest abstract standard of social and distributive justice; toward which all institutions and the efforts of all virtuous citizens should be made in the utmost possible degree to converge. But this great moral duty rests upon a still deeper foundation, being a direct emanation from the first principle of morals, and not a mere logical corollary from secondary or derivative doctrines. It is involved in the very meaning of Utility or the Greatest Happiness Principle. That principle is a mere form of words without rational signification unless one person's happiness, supposed equal in degree . . . is counted for exactly as much as another's. These conditions being supplied, Bentham's dictum "every body to count for one, nobody for more than one" might be written under the principle of utility as an explanatory commentary.¹

But for a consistent Utilitarianism, the principle of equality, as that of legality and the reward of motive, is not absolute. Equality of consideration for the members of society does not seem to be involved in the very meaning of the principle of utility. It is, however, a matter of observation, that equality of consideration is more likely to effect a maximum production of happiness than any alternative to such equality. This fact constitutes the principle's value. It is true that "one person's happiness" must be "counted for exactly as much as another's" granting them "equal in degree." This, as Mill himself states in a footnote, is a tautology. It merely claims that "equal amounts of happiness are equally desirable."² Although equality is not implicit in the definition of utility, its usefulness seems clear, and although the distribution of happiness may be a matter of indifference to the

¹Ibid., pp.57 f.

²Ibid., p. 58.

utilitarian, this is not true of the distribution of its causes. The last part of Mill's statement that "the equal claim of everybody to happiness in the estimation of the moralist and of the legislator, involves an equal claim to all the means of happiness,"¹ is consistent with his general position. For it seems to be one of the conditions of the production of happiness in large amounts that the means to happiness should be widely distributed. Equality of opportunity perhaps may be considered an empirical corollary to the principle of utility.

The relationship between justice and utility has now been made plain.

It appears from what has been said that justice is a name for certain moral requirements which, regarded collectively stand higher in the scale of social utility and are therefore of more paramount obligation than any others; though particular cases may occur in which some other social duty is so important as to over-rule anyone of the general maxims of justice Justice remains the appropriate name for certain social utilities which are vastly more important and therefore more absolute and imperative than any others are as a class²

Activity in accordance with law, the rewarding of virtuous motives, adherence to provisions of contracts, treating others with equality of consideration, remain the virtues of individuals and the aims of legislation and of government. These are the intermediate generalities flowing from the principle of utility. Upon this note the Utilitarianism comes to a close.

The place of this essay in the social philosophy of Mill can now be summarized. Just as Mill's enterprise was basically one of social reform, just as he recognized so clearly that "all the grand sources of human suffering are in a great degree, many of them almost entirely conquerable by human care and effort,"³ it was apparent to him that any program of social reform must depend

¹Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 14.

²Ibid., pp. 59 f.

upon the construction or isolation of an ultimate ethical principle.

The Utilitarianism is the theoretical attempt to set up the basic principle which must be applied by the social engineer, and it signifies Mill's faith (1) that the validation of ethical norms is rationally possible and (2) that there is an intimate and important relation between the first principle of morals, and the dictates of casuistry. Although in his own treatment of ethical method, Mill must be interpreted as suggesting that an empirical science of ethics is possible, the Utilitarianism indicates that at many points Mill has ignored or forgotten the attack upon the intuitionist method which he himself had previously made in the System of Logic and in the early essays "Bentham" and "Dr. Whewell on Moral Philosophy." The inconsistencies of the Utilitarianism such as the qualitative distinction among pleasures and the appeal to conscientious feeling may be easily identified, while certain of Mill's insights deserve a similar emphasis. Such for example is his belief that the principle of utility is not merely a "subjective preference of the moralist," but follows from a consideration of the facts of human nature, and that whereas it is not susceptible of direct proof, it may be indirectly established. Likewise important is the statement that the idea of justice is not intuitionally established, but rests upon the principle of utility.

From the many suggestions derivable from the Utilitarianism, three may be isolated as particularly significant of Mill's point of view. Speaking with great generality, the chief concern of Mill's ethical labors was to clarify the aims of social reconstruction. This enterprise involved an attempt to validate a system of ethics. This attempt in turn resulted in a restatement of utilitarian morality. In the final formulation happiness is made

the supreme value, with calculation of consequences an important consideration and equality of consideration a direct deduction from the utilitarian first principle. The positive outcome of Mill's ethical investigation is the emphasis of these principles for a planned society; (1) the ultimate end of society is the production of a maximum amount of pleasurable feeling among its members (2) pleasurable feelings are capable of rational calculation (3) all individuals should be given an equal opportunity to possess the means of happiness.

CHAPTER II

MILL'S ECONOMIC DOCTRINES

It can be plausibly argued that in his chief economic treatise, the Principles of Political Economy, published in 1848,¹ as well as in the earlier essay, "The Claims of Labor" (1845) and the later "Chapters on Socialism" (1879), Mill is interested not only in the factors of economic analysis, but in a normative appraisal of economic institutions.

From this point of view the Principles presents a nice problem. Composed partially as a treatise to codify the classical economic doctrines of Malthus, Ricardo, and James Mill, it ventures constantly into the field of proposals for social reform. In the Preface to the first edition of the Principles, Mill states,

For practical purposes Political Economy is inseparably intertwined with many other branches of Social Philosophy there are perhaps no practical questions even among those which approach nearest to the character of purely economical questions which admit of being decided on economical premises alone.²

Mill's fluctuation between the attempt to formulate economic laws, and the attempt to propose the radical amendment of existing economic institutions is exhibited in the distinction which he made between laws of production and those of distribution. This distinction is asserted at the beginning of the second book of the Principles.

The laws and conditions of the Production of wealth partake of

¹Principles of Political Economy: With Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy, ed. W. J. Ashley (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1929). All citations will be drawn from this edition.

²Ibid., p. xxvii.

the character of physical truths. There is nothing optional or arbitrary in them. Whatever mankind produce, must be produced in the modes and under the conditions imposed by the constitution of external things and by the inherent properties of their own bodily and mental structure It is not so with the Distribution of wealth. That is a matter of human institutions solely. The things once there, mankind individually or collectively can do with them as they like. They can place them at the disposal of whomsoever they please and on whatever terms. Further, in the social state, in every state except total solitude, any disposal whatever of them can only take place by the consent of society or rather of those who dispose of its active force The distribution of wealth, therefore, depends on the laws and customs of society. The rules by which it is determined are what the opinions and feelings of the ruling portion of the community make them, and are very different in different ages and countries; and might be still more different if mankind so chose.¹

Here is an entering wedge which serves to bridge the gap between economists and social engineers. Mill himself was convinced of the great importance of this distinction, and there is evidence that he believed that it was his distinctive contribution to the field of political economy.²

One of the effects of the distinction is a broadening of the concept of the economic. Mill is not insisting that the laws of distribution differ from those of production in being arbitrary and indeterminate. But prior to the composition of the Principles the influence of Comte was particularly strong. The purpose of Comte's enterprise was to found a systematic social science. Comte disapproved of the abstractive process which granted independence to individual social sciences. Consequently, he conceived of Poli-

¹Principles, pp. 199 f.

²In a letter to Comte of April 3, 1844, Mill mentions (four years before its publication) his intention of constructing a Political Economy and dwells mainly upon this distinction. ". . . . et je m'attacherais surtout à séparer les lois générales de la production, nécessairement communes à toutes les sociétés industrielles, des principes de la distribution et de l'échange des richesses, principes qui supposent nécessairement un état de société déterminé." Lettres Inédites de John Stuart Mill à Auguste Comte, par L. Lévy-Bruhl (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1899), p. 309.

tical Economy as a branch of the more comprehensive field of sociology.¹ Mill's distinction between principles of production and principles of distribution implies not that the latter fail to exhibit causal sequence, but that such causal sequences as they do reveal are complicated by sociological rather than by purely economic factors.

Unlike the laws of Production, those of Distribution are partly of human institution; since the manner in which wealth is distributed in any given society, depends on the statutes or usages therein obtaining. But though governments or nations have the power of deciding what institutions shall exist, they cannot arbitrarily determine how those institutions shall work. The conditions on which the power they possess over the distribution of wealth is dependent, and the manner in which the distribution is effected by the various modes of conduct which society may think fit to adopt, are as much a subject for scientific enquiry as any of the physical laws of nature.²

In making the distinction between laws of production and distribution, Mill was perhaps separating these two fields in a manner inconsistent with his later economic ideas,³ but was nevertheless asserting a cleavage essentially useful to his ultimate purposes. He is particularly insistent that the two subjects be kept separate. He speaks at the beginning of the book on Exchange of

the error too common in political economy of not distinguishing between necessities arising from the nature of things and those created by social arrangements; an error which appears to me to be at all times producing two opposite mischiefs; on the one hand, causing political economists to class the merely temporary truths of their subject among its permanent and universal laws; and on the other leading many persons to mistake the per-

¹Writing to Mill May 1, 1844, Comte states: ". . . l'analyse économique proprement dite ne me semble pas devoir finalement être conçue ni cultivée, soit dogmatiquement soit historiquement, à part de l'ensemble de l'analyse sociologique soit statique, soit dynamique . . ." *Ibid.*, p. 314.

²Principles, p. 21.

³It is doubtful whether they can be completely separated in the treatment of a subject such as "cooperatives"--a topic on which Mill has subsequently much to say. Gide and Rist, A History of Economic Doctrines (New York: D. C. Heath & Co., n. d.), p. 369.

manent laws of Production (such as those on which the necessity is grounded of restraining population) for temporary accidents arising from the existing constitution of society--which those who would frame a new system of social arrangements are at liberty to disregard.¹

Thus Mill asserts on the one hand that the supposed laws which were considered axiomatic in Ricardian economics, were but tentative and modifiable,² and on the other that the laws governing production were insufficiently rigorous.

The distinction between the principles of production and of distribution illustrates an interesting feature of Mill's economic thinking; namely that he conceives of political economy as related to social philosophy. But although Mill's work in political economy adds fresh insights on concrete social problems, to a restatement of classical economic doctrine, the normative character of his judgments is frequently concealed. This is particularly true of his work prior to the second edition of the Principles issued in 1849. In the first edition of the Principles, Mill is explicit in restricting the word value to a purely economic meaning. Thus he repudiates the attempt to outline a psychology of wants or of consumption as the task of economics, and denies that moral judgments are relevant to its subject matter.³

¹Principles, p. 436.

²Thus in an article "Thornton On Labor and Its Claims" published May, 1869 in the Fortnightly Review, Mill made his famous recantation of the wage-fund theory and admitted that external factors such as the activity of trade unions might be effective in raising the level of wages. Dissertations and Discussions (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1875), V, 47 ff. Gide and Rist say in this connection, "Contrary to the opinion of the classical school, he tries to show that wages, profits and rent are not determined by immutable laws against which the will of man can never prevail The door was thus open for social reform." Op. cit., p. 368.

³Political economy has nothing to do with the comparative estimation of different uses in the judgment of a philosopher or of a moralist. The use of a thing in political economy, means its capacity to satisfy a desire or serve a purpose." Principles, p. 437.

But as Mill's interest in economic laws gives way to his preoccupation with proposals for economic reform, the importance of norms is more explicitly recognized. The Principles contains no formal appeal to the principle of Utilitarianism as such, while the later "Chapters on Socialism" makes constant reference to a moral criterion. This is even more apparent if one compares Mill's early essay on "The Claims of Labor" published in the Edinburgh Review, April, 1845,¹ with the late essay "Thornton on Labor and Its Claims," appearing in the Fortnightly Review, May, 1869. Within the twenty-four year period which separates the publication of these two essays, Mill had written the Utilitarianism, and whereas the Edinburgh article treated the problem of the laborer almost entirely in terms of social implications, the Fortnightly contribution makes it abundantly clear that the labor problem must be conceived primarily in terms of its ethical aspects. The principle of utility becomes the ultimate guide.²

It is now possible to give a generalized statement of the social import of Mill's economic doctrine. Originating as a theoretical tract in the tradition of the classical economists, Mill's Principles gradually shifts to considerations of social policy. What begins as an abstract treatment of economic laws, eventuates as a treatise on social philosophy. This shift is clearly exemplified in Mill's ever-lessening interest in the principles of production, and his ever-increasing preoccupation with problems of distribution.³ Also, Mill's thinking becomes increasingly ra-

¹Reprinted Dissertations and Discussions (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1873), Vol. II.

²Dissertations and Discussions, V, 61, 70, 77.

³Although problems of both production and distribution are treated in the Principles, and elsewhere, and hence although Mill's work in economics properly speaking is both technical and

dical as its sources become predominantly French, rather than English.

It is not easy to analyze the complexity of Mill's economic doctrines so as to identify his sources. As in his other works, the breadth of his thinking, and the latitude of his indebtedness to other minds make dogmatism impossible. However, the evolution of Mill's economic doctrines from the time he first reads Ricardo in 1819 to the writing of the "Chapters on Socialism" just a half century afterward,¹ is so definitely characterized by increasing radicalism, that some mention should be made of the probable reasons. The most likely of these was the influence of the French Socialists. As early as 1830 Mill was introduced to the doctrine of the followers of St. Simon; and in the Autobiography, he regis-

philosophical, this essay will be entirely oriented around the latter rather than the former aspect of his work. The task of technical analysis of his economic principles is (even if the competence were available), irrelevant to the dominant purpose of this investigation. Consequently, although cursory references may be made to all sections of the Principles, primary dependence will be upon Bk. II, Distribution; Bk. IV, Influence of the Progress of Society on Production and Distribution; and Bk. V, On the Influence of Government. Bk. I, Production, and Bk. III, Exchange, will be for practical purposes neglected.

¹The following is a chronological account of Mill's chief experiences in Political Economy.

1819-Reads Ricardo

1820-Visits M. Say in France

1821-Reads father's Elements of Political Economy

1822-Two Letters on the Measure of Value

1829-Writes Unsettled Questions of Political Economy, although these are not published until 1844.

1845-Publishes "Claims of Labor" in Edinburgh Review

1847-Writes Principles of Political Economy

1848-Publishes " " " "

1849-Revises " " " "

1852- " " " "

1857- " " " "

1862- " " " "

1865- " " " "

1869-Publishes "Thornton On the Claims of Labor" in Fortnightly Review

" -Writes "Chapters on Socialism"

1871-Revises Principles of Political Economy

1873-Publishes "Papers on Land Tenure"

1879-Publication of "Socialism" in Fortnightly Review

ters his indebtedness.

Their criticisms on the common doctrines of Liberalism seemed to me full of important truth; and it was partly by their writings that my eyes were opened to the very limited and temporary value of the old political economy, which assumes private property and inheritance as indefeasible facts, and freedom of production and exchange as the dernier mot of social improvement. The scheme gradually unfolded by the St. Simonians, under which the labour and capital of society would be managed for the general account of the community, every individual being required to take a share of labour, either as thinker, teacher, artist, or producer, all being classed according to their capacity, and remunerated according to their works, appeared to me a far superior description of Socialism to Owen's.¹

The interest aroused by St. Simon was reflected partially in the first edition of the Principles but with the French "coup" of 1848, Mill was led to consider more at length the problems raised by Socialism and the institution of "Cooperatives." The prefaces to both the editions of 1849 and 1852 of the Principles as well as the modifications of the text of these editions makes this abundantly clear.

It might be said that Mill's economic thought is most fruitfully to be interpreted as a progressive abandonment of the individualism of the classical economists for a more socialistic doctrine. And yet to assert this statement literally would be to falsify the description of his intellectual development. For Mill's progress toward Socialism was by no means uniform and cumulative. Mill, writing of his opinions of about 1840, speaks of his conversion to a "qualified Socialism,"² and of the opinions held jointly by Mrs. Taylor and himself in the latter portion of his life as follows:

Our ideal of ultimate improvement went far beyond Democracy and would class us decidedly under the general designation of Socialists. While we repudiated with the greatest energy that

¹Autobiography (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), p. 117.

²Ibid., p. 133.

tyranny of society over the individual which most socialistic systems are supposed to involve, we yet looked forward to a time when society will no longer be divided into the idle and the industrious; when the rule that they who do not work shall not eat, will be applied not to paupers only, but impartially to all, when the division of the produce of labour, instead of depending, as in so great a degree it now does, on the accident of birth, will be made by concert on an acknowledged principle of justice; and when it will no longer either be or be thought to be, impossible for human beings to exert themselves strenuously in procuring benefits which are not to be exclusively their own, but to be shared with the society they belong to. The social problem of the future we considered to be, how to unite the greatest individual liberty of action with a common ownership in the raw material of the globe, and an equal participation of all in the benefits of combined labour.¹

As early as 1845 Mill had given serious thought to the rights of the lower classes,² and had expressed not only sympathy with these rights, but constructive proposals for their achievement. This sympathy finds complete elaboration in the Principles. The famous Chapter VII of the fourth book opens in the following fashion:

The observations in the preceding chapter had for their principal object to deprecate a false ideal of human society. Their applicability to the practical purposes of present times consists in moderating the inordinate importance attached to the mere increase of production, and fixing attention upon improved distribution and a large remuneration of labour as the two desiderata. Whether the aggregate produce increases absolutely or not is a thing in which after a certain amount has been obtained, neither the legislator nor the philanthropist need feel any strong interest: but that it should increase relatively to the number of those who share in it, is of the utmost possible importance; and this . . . must depend on the opinions and habits of the most numerous class, the class of manual labourers.³

Mill's sympathy with the laboring class ultimately reduces to his belief that in a truly functional society, there is but a single class of workers. For he continues

When I speak either in this place or elsewhere of the "labouring classes" or of labourers as a "class," I use those phrases in compliance with custom and as descriptive of an existing, but by no means a necessary or permanent state of

¹Ibid., p. 162.

²Dissertations and Discussions (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1873), II, 260-297.

³Principles, p. 752.

social relations. I do not recognize as either just or salutary, a state of society in which there is any "class" which is not labouring; any human beings exempt from bearing their share of the necessary labours of human life except those unable to labour, or who have fairly earned rest by previous toil. So long, however, as the great social evil exists of a non-labouring class, labourers also constitute a class, and may be spoken of, though only provisionally, in that character.¹

It was characteristic of Mill to espouse the cause of the laboring classes against the selfishness of privilege and power,² and yet this is due less to a natural temperamental bias than to a real awareness of the critical economic problems confronting his age. Thus, for example, in the important "Chapters on Socialism"³ Mill indicates how the logic of events has led to the necessity of a rational consideration of the problem of distribution and the right of private property.

Pointing out that the Reform Act of 1867 has given increased electoral powers to the working classes, and that these classes have interests of their own,⁴ Mill insists that the problem of private property has now become crucial. Hence he recognized that Socialism must be minutely analyzed in order that the claims of labor might be substantiated or rejected on their merits and by general consent, so that "instead of a hostile conflict, physical or only moral, between the old and the new, the best parts of both may be combined in a renovated social fabric."⁵

The essential fairness of Mill's attitude is nowhere better exhibited than in this effort to resolve a crucial social conflict in terms of free discussion and the application of rationality.

¹Ibid., p. 753.

²See further ibid., p. 574 and Autobiography, pp. 120f.

³Written in 1869. First published Fortnightly Review, Vol. XXV (London: Chapman and Hall, 1879).

⁴Ibid., p. 219.

⁵Ibid.

Here is the same recognition as exists in the essays on Liberty and Utilitarianism, that political problems are not essentially power problems, but moral problems. For it is Mill's belief that even the problem of inequality must be solved not as a compromise between interested parties engaged in political strategy, but on the basis of a reason whose objectivity is beyond question. The first stage is the scientific examination of social alternatives.

The working classes are entitled to claim that the whole field of social institutions should be re-examined, and every question considered as if it now arose for the first time; with the idea constantly in view that the persons who are to be convinced are not those who owe their ease and importance to the present system, but persons who have no other interest in the matter than abstract justice and the general good of the community. It should be the object to ascertain what institutions of property would be established by an unprejudiced legislator, absolutely impartial between the possessors of property and the non-possessors, and to defend and justify them by the reasons which would really influence such a legislator and not by such as have the appearance of being got up to make out a case for what already exists. Such rights or privileges of property as will not stand this test will sooner or later have to be given up.¹

As early as 1845 Mill was enabled to state "the claims of labor have become the question of the day."² There is no doubt that Mill had sympathy for the laboring classes, and that the Principles is unusual for its age in the extent to which it advocates the claims of labor. But although Mill is cognizant of the evils of inequality,³ and poverty, his proposals for substantiating the claims of labor are not consistent. This lack of consistency is due to the indecisiveness which cleaves his economic policy in two.

Proposals for ameliorating the lot of the laboring classes may be oriented about two separate axes. On the one hand, they may

¹Ibid., p. 223.

²Dissertations and Discussions, II, 261.

³"Chapters On Socialism" op. cit., p. 222.

change the function and status of the laborer by building an entirely new social order about him, and on the other they may preserve his essential place in the existing economic configuration while attempting to secure to that place some measure of social justice. Mill was interested in both of these attempts.

Mill's theory relative to the improvement of the conditions of labor is unoriginal since it merely restates in combination the "Wage-Fund" theory of Ricardo, and Malthus' population doctrine. The poverty of the working classes is due to the depression of the wage scale. The scale of wages depends upon the demand and supply of labor.¹ There is a certain fixed amount of capital available for wages. Thus "wages depend on the proportion between the number of the laboring population, and the capital or other funds devoted to the purchase of labor."² Since the wage fund is fixed, and the level of wages is a function of the proportion of the fund and the number of laborers, increase of the general wage level can only be brought about by restriction of the population. At this point Mill's Malthusianism begins to dominate the Principles. In a famous passage, Mill indicates that social inequality is not only dependent upon human injustice, but upon the lack of prudence which prevents society from carefully controlling the relation of its population growth to the means of subsistence.

The necessity of restraining population is not, as many persons believe, peculiar to a condition of great inequality of property the niggardliness of nature, not the injustice of society is the cause of the penalty attached to over-population Whether at the present or any other time, the produce of industry proportionally to the labor employed is increasing or diminishing, and the average condition of the people improving or deteriorating, depends upon whether population is advancing faster than improvement or improvement than population.³

¹Principles, p. 341.

³Ibid., p. 191.

²Ibid., p. 349.

Because of the "law of the dependence of wages on population,"¹ it would seem to be the first duty of the legislator to propose drastic measures for population limitation. Mill had advocated a policy of marriage restriction as early as 1845,² and the Principles continues along these lines. Mill begins, however, with a consideration of current popular remedies for low wages. Among these is the proposal to fix a minimum wage by law,³ (leaving maximum variations to be fixed by competition), or to leave the determination of such a minimum wage to a body of experts who would be influenced by natural principles of equity. Mill is quick to note the error in this plan. A minimum wage law can be of long range benefit to the community only if there is a guarantee of total or almost total employment. Thus the extent as well as the level of employment is economically of consequence, and extended re-employment could only be efficient if there were a real demand for services. To employ individuals out of charity, to "exact labor in exchange for support" Mill deemed to be fatal, and in words which may seem almost prophetic to present day Americans he stated;

Experience has shown the sort of work to be expected from recipients of public charity. When the pay is not given for the sake of the work, but the work found for the sake of the pay, inefficiency is a matter of certainty: to extract real work from day-labourers without the power of dismissal, is only practicable by the power of the lash.⁴

The great danger of a minimum wage provision (as indeed of the Allowance System which flourished in England about the first quarter of the nineteenth century), was that it would bring about temporary and superficial removal of the symptoms while encouraging

¹Ibid., p. 379.

²Dissertations and Discussions, II, 277.

³Mill's treatment of this proposal occurs in Principles, Bk. II, chap. xii.

⁴Ibid., p. 363.

the cause of the disease. It would curtail present poverty, but only at the cost of allowing overpopulation to proceed apace. Mill, like Malthus, is opposed to poor laws or social charity in any form, not because of belief in a brutal individualism, but from the conviction that economic welfare could only be secured on the basis of drastic population control.

Poverty, like most social evils, exists because men follow their brute instincts without due consideration. But society is possible precisely because man is not necessarily a brute. Civilization in every one of its aspects is a struggle against the animal instincts.¹

The drive of civilization toward social betterment is most clearly exhibited in the principle of population restraint. As there is real cultural advance, society expresses its foresight in the conscious control of its own numbers.

Mill's attitude toward the right of labor to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining is instructive. Although his belief in this "right" never wavered, his belief in its efficacy underwent profound transformation. Recognizing that a social order based on competition must respect the power of all parties in the competitive struggle, Mill is insistent upon the rights of labor. This insistence is expressed most cogently in the sixth section of the famous chapter of the Principles, "Of Interferences of Government Grounded on Erroneous Theories." Mill is here protesting government interference with free competition as expressed in the laws against combinations of workmen.

I do not hesitate to say that associations of labourers, of a nature similar to trade unions, far from being a hindrance to a free market for labour, are the necessary instrumentality of that free market; the indispensable means of enabling the sellers of labour to take due care of their own interests under a system of competition.²

Still, Mill was pessimistic about the possibility of such combinations really effecting a rise in the status of the worker. In

¹Ibid., p. 373.

²Ibid., p. 937.

the 1848 edition of the Principles, Mill had stated,

If it were possible for the working classes, by combining among themselves to raise or keep up the general rate of wages, it needs hardly be said that this would be a thing not to be punished, but to be welcomed and rejoiced at. Unfortunately the effect is quite beyond attainment by such means.¹

Mill's pessimism was due to his conviction that the wage rate could only be fixed by the unalterable law of supply and demand which operated in the manner described by Ricardo's "Wage-Fund" theory. But as previously stated, between 1848 and 1869 Mill had read Thornton's work On Labor and Its Claims and in the Fortnightly Review of May, 1869 was published the famous review of this book in which Mill announced his conversion to the belief that labor unions might be an effective force in the labor market.

But though the population principle and its consequences are in no way touched by anything that Mr. Thornton has advanced, in another of its bearings the labour question considered as one of mere economics, assumes a materially changed aspect. The doctrine hitherto taught by all or most economists (including myself) which denied it to be possible that trade combinations can raise wages, . . . this doctrine is deprived of its scientific foundation and must be thrown aside. The right and wrong of the proceedings of Trades' Unions becomes a common question of prudence and social duty, not one which is peremptorily decided by unbending necessities of political economy.²

The 1871 edition of the Principles proceeds not only to approve trade unions but the collective action of strikes. Since the moral demand that labourers share in the profits of their labor implies the proportional rise of workers' wages with employer profits, any method which brings this about is valuable.

Strikes therefore, and the trade societies which render strikes possible, are for these various reasons not a mischievous, but on the contrary, a valuable part of the existing machinery of society.³

Thus far Mill has dealt with the claims of labor first by showing that these claims fall under the wider problem of society's

¹Ibid., p. 934.

³Principles, p. 938.

²Dissertations and Discussions, V, 52.

population policy, and secondly by advocating equal representation for the claims of labor within the competitive scheme. But Mill's shift in regard to the stand on labor unions indicates more than a mere change of economic doctrine. It shows that the evolution of his economic theory is in the direction of a moral orientation of social policy. This change has become manifest in the Fortnightly article of 1869. Since Mill can no longer regard the question of the value of trade unions as one answerable by economic law, it must henceforth fall within the domain of moral law.

Since there is a certain range, wider than has been generally believed, within which the price of labour is decided by a conflict of wills between employers and labourers, it is necessary as in every other case of human voluntary action to ascertain the moral principles by which this conflict ought to be regulated. The terms of the bargain not being a matter of necessity, but within certain limits, of choice, it has to be considered how far either side can rightfully press its claims, and take advantage of its opportunities. Or, to express the same ideas in other phraseology, it has to be decided whether there are any rights of labour on the one hand or of capital on the other which would be violated if the opposite party pushed its pretensions to the extreme limits of economic possibility.¹

In consideration of the above, Mill cites the two opposing theories of Thornton and Proudhon, the former claiming that the conflict between capital and labor (except for the preservation of the voluntary nature of the contract), is not ethical at all, the latter, on the contrary, claiming that labor has a natural right to share in the profits from its productivity. Without specifically settling the question, Mill returns to the ethical position of the Utilitarianism. He points out once again that here two conflicting principles of justice are in direct antagonism, and that since each is asserted on a priori, intuitional grounds, the argument is brought to an impasse.² The difficulty only arises

¹Dissertations and Discussions, V, 54.

²Ibid., p. 60.

because the utilitarian theory is not applied, and because consequences are not made the conclusive criterion of moral rectitude. The problem of the claims of labor is insoluble so long as there is an attempt to apply intuitionism; only a thorough-going utilitarian calculation will establish an adequate economic policy in this respect.

I have stated that Mill's approach to the problem of inequality and hence to the claims of labor is poised between faith in the efficacy of the competitive system, and sympathy toward the construction of a completely new social order. Mill's proposals for population reform and the recognition of worker associations for collective bargaining were in the competitive tradition. Here, members of the working class are conceived as labor competitors of each other, and the entire class of laborers as antagonistic to the employer class. Conflict of interest between members of industrial society is a matter of acknowledgment, and attempts to maintain the efficiency of the system are directed toward making possible the free exercise of the competitive principle. But Mill was likewise fascinated by the possibility of social reconstruction on a totally different basis; on the assumption of economic cooperation rather than economic struggle. Thus Mill put forward the alternative proposal of cooperatives for the adjudication of the claims of labor.

Mill's interest in cooperatives is the result of belief in two definite principles. The first of these is the principle of proportional remuneration or conditional compensation; the second is the demand for a coincidence of interest among the members of society. Apropos of the claims of labor, the first is impossible because the second does not exist. Laborers are not compensated conditionally upon their performance of services because the in-

stitutional organization of society is such as to make them possible victims of economic exploitation. Whereas manual labor should be remunerated in proportion to its severity, precisely the opposite is the case.

The more revolting the occupation, the more certain it is to receive the minimum of remuneration, because it devolves on the most helpless and degraded, on those who from squalid poverty, or from want of skill and education, are rejected from all other employment. Partly from this cause, and partly from the natural and artificial monopolies which will be spoken of presently, the inequalities of wages are generally in an opposite direction to the equitable principle of compensation erroneously represented by Adam Smith as the general law of the remuneration of labour. The hardships and the earnings, instead of being directly proportional, as in any just arrangement of society they would be, are generally in an inverse ratio to one another.¹

The above form of injustice is supplemented by the imperfection of society which permits a conflict of interest between individuals and classes. Mill has often been termed an individualist, but he deprecated the rampant economic individualism of his time, and deemed it but a stage in the process of economic evolution.

I confess I am not charmed with the ideal of life held out by those who think that the normal state of human beings is that of struggling to get on; that the trampling, crushing, elbowing, and treading on each other's heels, which form the existing type of social life are the most desirable lot of human kind, or anything but the disagreeable symptoms of one of the phases of industrial progress.²

One of the results of this "phase of industrial progress" was the class cleavage which split Victorian society. This cleavage between privilege and power on the one hand and labor on the other had become apparent to the workers themselves.³

¹Principles, p. 388.

²Ibid., p. 748.

³"The working classes have taken their interests into their own hands, and are perpetually showing that they think the interests of their employers not identical with their own, but opposite to them." Ibid., p. 756.

The antagonistic interests of Capital and Labor is a fundamental defect and one which seems to demand complete institutional change. Says Mill, "It is not to be expected that the division of the human race into two hereditary classes, employers and employed, can be permanently maintained."¹ But if this division is to be abolished, what is to be substituted? The solution must lie with that system which retains efficiency and at the same time discards the fatal division of class interests.

The problem is to obtain the efficiency and economy of production on a large scale, without dividing the producers into two parties with hostile interests, employers and employed, the many who do the work being mere servants under the command of the one who supplies the funds²

Such productive efficiency can be achieved through the substitution of association for enmity, and cooperation for conflict. The new social institution which Mill approves for this purpose is that of the producers' cooperative.

As early as 1845, (in "The Claims of Labour", in which he had advocated the doctrine of population restriction) Mill had asserted that the final resolution of the claims of labor was the establishment of cooperatives which would ensure the association of interests.³ Unfortunately, the partnership laws then in effect in England were unfavorable to this type of enterprise, and in this same essay, Mill suggests the framing of partnership laws which might be more favorable.⁴ Seven years later such partnership laws were actually passed and this event is celebrated by Mill in a letter of July, 1852, to Professor Rau.⁵

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., pp. 762 f., n.

³Dissertations and Discussions, II, 289, 293.

⁴Ibid., p. 294.

⁵Letters of John Stuart Mill, ed. Hugh Elliot (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1910), I, 172.

Not only is the cooperative movement the solution to the difficulties between capital and labor, not only does it destroy the fatal conflict over the equitable distribution of profits, but it also causes a marked increase in the productiveness of industry.¹ First of all, by facilitating direct exchange between consumer and producer, the class of mere distributors is drastically reduced. Such reduction serves to limit the numbers among whom profits are to be distributed and to increase the number of individuals available for production. And in the second place, cooperatives aid production through the great change which they work in the attitude of laborers themselves. Where it is to the interest of the laborer to do as little for his pay as possible it is unrealistic to assume that a sense of duty will triumph over self-interest. But a cooperative is an institution so designed that men in working for their own benefit automatically effect the benefit of others. Cooperatives further develop social sympathy through emphasizing the community of human interests, and leadership through insistence upon the close relationship of labor and management. Their greatest achievement is that they combine democratic policy with productive efficiency. Mill's statement of this insight glows with enthusiasm.

The other mode in which cooperation tends, still more efficaciously to increase the productiveness of labour consists in the vast stimulus given to productive energies by placing the labourers as a mass in a relation to their work which would make it their principle and their interest -- at present it is neither -- to do the utmost instead of the least possible, in exchange for their remuneration. It is scarcely possible to rate too highly this material benefit which yet is as nothing compared with the moral revolution in society that would accompany it: the healing of the standing feud between capital and labour; the transformation of human life from a conflict of classes struggling for opposite interest to a friendly rivalry in the pursuit of a good common to all; the elevation of the dignity of labour; a new sense of security and independence in the labouring class; and the conversion of each human

¹Principles, p. 789.

being's daily occupation into a school of the social sympathies and the practical intelligence.¹

Inspired originally as a proposal to mediate the conflicting claims of employer and employee, the cooperative principle underwent progressive expansion in the economic theory of Mill. It finally grounded itself upon the principle that society must be so constructed as to insure automatically a coincidence of interest. When thus enlarged, it envisaged a re-organization of social institutions which would involve the complete destruction of the wage system, the capitalist class, and the custom of private profit.

When, however, cooperative societies shall have sufficiently multiplied, it is not probable that any but the least valuable work-people will any longer consent to work all their lives for wages merely; both private capitalists and associations will gradually find it necessary to make the entire body of labourers participants in profits. Eventually, and in perhaps a less remote future than may be supposed, we may, through the cooperative principle see our way to a change in society, which would combine the freedom and independence of the individual with the moral, intellectual, and economical advantages of aggregate production; and which without violence or spoliation, or even any sudden disturbance of existing habits and expectations, would realize, at least in the industrial department, the best aspirations of the democratic spirit, by putting an end to the division of society into the industrious and the idle, and effacing all social distinctions but those fairly earned by personal services and exertions As associations multiplied, they would tend more and more to absorb all work-people existing accumulations of capital might honestly, and by a kind of spontaneous process become in the end the joint property of all who participate in their productive employment: a transformation which would be the nearest approach to social justice and the most beneficial ordering of industrial affairs for the universal good which it is possible at present to foresee.²

At this point, the problem of the claims of labor passes over into the more general problem of socialism.

Mill's two primary treatments of socialism come in the early chapters of the second book of the Principles and in the "Chapters On Socialism" published long afterwards in the Fortnightly Review. The treatment in the Principles is complicated by the fact that Mill's ideas apparently underwent change during the interval 1848-

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 791.

1852. The discussion of socialism in the first edition is little more than perfunctory. The preface to the second edition announces that "the increased importance which the Socialist controversy has assumed since this work was written has made it desirable to enlarge the chapter which treats of it."¹ Such consideration of socialism as both the first and second editions contained was critical and hence was interpreted as indicating Mill's distaste for socialistic principles. This, however, was not Mill's intention, as a perusal of his correspondence² as well as the preface to the third edition discloses. The latter contains perhaps the best statement of Mill's final position derivable from the Principles.³

Mill's examination of socialistic doctrine in the Principles depends upon the previously noted distinction between the principles of production and those of distribution. Since the latter are the product of community attitudes, it is essential to examine alternative systems of distribution in order to provide a rational foundation for social policy. Alternative theories center

¹Ibid., p. xxix.

²See particularly epistles to Jay, Soetbeer, Rau. Letters, pp. 138, 167 f., 169.

³Principles, p. xxix. "The chapter on Property has been almost entirely re-written. I was far from intending that the statement which it contained of the objections to the best known Socialist schemes should be understood as a condemnation of Socialism, regarded as an ultimate result of human progress. The only objection to which any great importance will be found to be attached in the present edition is the unprepared state of mankind in general, and of the labouring classes in particular It appears to me that the great end of social improvement should be to fit mankind by cultivation for a state of society combining the greatest personal freedom with that just distribution of the fruits of labour which the present laws of property do not profess to aim at. Whether when this state of mental and moral cultivation shall be attained, individual property in some form or community of ownership in the instruments of production and a regulated division of the produce will afford the circumstances most favorable to happiness, and best calculated to bring human nature to its greatest perfection is a question which must be left to the people of that time to decide. Those of the present are not competent to decide it."

around the question of private property.

According to Mill¹ those who oppose individual property may be classified as (1) those who advocate an absolute distributive equality, and (2) those who propose a relative inequality grounded on a principle of distributive justice. The former Mill calls communists, and classifies Owen and Louis Blanc in this category: the latter he calls socialists and so designates St. Simon and Fourier. First insisting that "whatever may be the merits or defects of these various schemes, they cannot be truly said to be impracticable,"² Mill proceeds to enumerate the stock arguments against collectivism and to evaluate them. The objection that automatic equality of distribution tends to promote evasion of responsibility on the part of the workers, he takes seriously, but points out that such a system would provide as much incentive to industry as the present one. But this can only be determined experimentally, and hence no ultimate answer can be given.³ To the objection that security of subsistence guaranteed under a collectivistic form would thwart all attempts at population control and hence in the long run reduce the living standard to a minimum, he replies that in such a system, where any lack of restraint would be directly felt as a public inconvenience, public opinion would more harshly than under the present system punish offenders. Perhaps the most serious difficulty is that of effecting a fair distribution of the labor to be done. Individuals differ in capacity, work differs in character, and a division of labor for productive efficiency raises

¹Ibid., p. 203.

²Ibid., p. 204.

³"To what extent, therefore, the energy of labour would be diminished by Communism or whether in the long run it would be diminished at all, must be considered for the present (1852) an undecided question." Ibid., p. 206.

difficult problems about the commensurability of different functions within the productive scheme.

Still, these difficulties are not of principle but of applicability, and although Mill recognizes that they remain to be solved, he yet admits that even with them, communism is a system preferable to the England of his day.¹ This does not mean that he approves the theory of communism. On the contrary, he insists that if communism is to be considered in terms of its greatest potentialities, the same must be done for private property. The evils of the economic order are not reducible to the fact that private property exists, but to the fact that the principles of private property have been perverted.

The laws of property have never yet conformed to the principles on which the justification of private property rests. They have made property of things which never ought to be property and absolute property where only a qualified property ought to exist.²

The great evil is inequality. Absolute equality neither can nor should be maintained, but the system of private property has tended toward the concentration rather than the diffusion of wealth. The complete absence of a canon of distributive justice has made private property the source of social chaos.

To the alternative proposed by Fourier and St. Simon, the objections to communism could not be applied. They put forward the

¹Ibid., p. 208. "If therefore the choice were to be made between Communism with all its chances and the present [1852] state of society with all its sufferings and injustices: if the institution of private property necessarily carried with it as a consequence that the produce of labour should be apportioned as we now see it, almost in an inverse ratio to the labour -- the largest portions to those who have never worked at all, the next largest to those whose work is almost nominal, and so in a descending scale, the remuneration dwindling as the work grows harder and more disagreeable . . . if this or communism were the alternative, all the difficulties great or small of Communism would be but as dust in the balance."

²Ibid., pp. 208 f.

plan of cooperative production with profit sharing. Although they initially proposed equal distribution of profits, the system was later abandoned, and the plan of conditional compensation substituted. This aspect of their proposals was very appealing to Mill, although he recognized the practical difficulty of dispensing unequal shares of profit with absolute justice. The fact that the Fourierist scheme did not abandon the principles of capitalism, but merely apportioned profit between the elements of labor, capital and talent (management) constituted a good part of its persuasiveness. Fourierism was really the advocacy of a type of cooperative which utilized the principle of the coincidence of interest. Since profit was distributed proportionally, increase in profit meant augmented profit sharing, and thus the motive to increase personal profit encouraged an efficiency which could but work to the interest of all. Combined with this advantage was the intelligent attempt of the Fourierists to minimize the labor cost of production both by effecting a change in attitude toward labor itself and by so adjusting the shifts of monotonous work that monotony would be at a minimum.¹

Ultimately, Mill's attitude in the Principles toward socialism as toward communism is one of tentativeness. After everything has been said on the side of theory, there still remains practice.

With regard to this, as to all other varieties of Socialism, the thing to be desired, and to which they have a just claim is opportunity of trial. They are all capable of being tried on a moderate scale, and at no risk, either personal or pecuniary, to any except those who try them. It is for experience to determine how far or how soon any one or more of the possible systems of community of property will be fitted to substitute itself for the "organization of industry" based on

¹Ibid., p. 214. "The Fourierists, however, have still another resource. They believe that they have solved the great and fundamental problem of rendering labour attractive This certainly is a most significant fact, and one from which the student in social philosophy may draw important instruction."

private ownership of land and capital.¹

To determine the efficiency and value of proposed institutions for social amelioration, experiment is necessary. It is not foolish conservatism but sound caution to prefer the experimental method in social affairs.

But until social experiment has conclusively determined the value of collectivistic forms of social organization, the present system of private property and competition may be expected to prevail. Hence the immediate concern of the social planner should be "not the subversion of the system of individual property, but the improvement of it, and the full participation of every member of the community in its benefits."² It is necessary to understand what Mill means by the term property.

The institution of property, when limited to its essential elements consists in the recognition, in each person, of a right to the exclusive disposal of what he or she have produced by their own exertions or received either by gift or by fair agreement without force or fraud from those who produced it. The foundation of the whole is the right of producers to what they themselves have produced.³

From Mill's conception of property, certain other doctrines follow. Those who inherit from others have property which is unearned, and hence this right should be abrogated in the interests of social justice.⁴ The right of bequest does deserve respect since it only grants the right of disposal to him who has earned, and hence it is implied in the very definition of private property. But although the right of bequest is one of the attributes of property, "property is only a means to an end, not itself the end," and it is by no means impossible that "the power of bequest may be so exercised as to conflict with the permanent interests of

¹Ibid., pp. 216 f.

³Ibid., p. 218.

²Ibid., p. 217.

⁴Ibid., p. 221.

the human race." When prevailing inequalities are detrimental to social well being, society has a perfect right to effect more equitable distribution. Inheritance tax and the limitation of bequests is a legitimate instrument for this purpose.¹

Certain types of goods, commonly recognized as private property, should not be so considered. This is true in the case of land. Land is not strictly the product of labor but that upon which labor operates, and no individual possesses the right to its personal appropriation. Land is not private property.

When the sacredness of property is talked of, it should always be remembered that any such sacredness does not belong in the same degree to landed property. No man made the land. It is the original inheritance of the whole species. Its appropriation is wholly a question of general expediency.²

The claims of individual ownership are limited by general welfare. Land is the property of society and its dispensation is directly dependent upon social policy. Individuals deserve compensation for whatever interest in land they may have acquired through labor and improvements, but ownership itself is a temporary privilege granted by society.

One of the implications of Mill's doctrine that land does not constitute private property is that the increase in value which naturally accrues to land through the passage of time should not be the possession of those who hold the land, but should revert to the state. This augmentation of value which is automatic and not due to human effort really belongs not to individuals but to society as a whole. The device which Mill would utilize to absorb this "unearned increment" is a land tax automatically adjusted to vary concomitantly with the increase in value of the land in question. Mill defends the justice of such a measure.

Suppose that there is a kind of income which constantly tends

¹Ibid., p. 228.

²Ibid., p. 233.

to increase, without any exertion or sacrifice on the part of the owners: those owners constituting a class in the community whom the natural course of things progressively enriches, consistently with complete passiveness on their own part. In such a case it would be no violation of the principles on which private property is grounded, if the state should appropriate this increase of wealth or part of it as it arises. This would not properly be taking anything from anybody: it would merely be applying an accession of wealth created by circumstances to the benefit of society, instead of allowing it to become an unearned appendage to the riches of a particular class.¹

It is interesting to note that the proposal to socialize land and to absorb unearned increment is one of the ideas which tends to recur throughout the body of Mill's writings. As early as 1840, in the London and Westminster Review, he advocated rigid control of landed possessions,² and forty years later the last articles that he wrote, the "Papers on Land Tenure," dealt with this subject and that of taxation for unearned increment.³ Perhaps he would have advocated complete state appropriation of land, had he not characteristically distrusted the capability and good will of those who would administer such appropriation. In a letter of 1870 to Alexander Campbell of Glasgow he states rather bluntly,

I agree with you that the land ought to belong to the nation at large, but I think it will be a generation or two before the progress of public intelligence and morality will permit so great a concern to be entrusted to public authorities without greater abuses than necessarily attach to private property in land. Meanwhile we should try to go on limiting the power of individuals over land by imposing more and more conditions on behalf of the people at large.⁴

¹Ibid., pp. 817 f.

²Dissertations and Discussions, II, 68 f.

³The "Papers on Land Tenure," all speeches or papers written 1870-1873 in the last years of Mill's life were meant to clarify the principles and advance the aims of the "Land Tenure Reform Association" which Mill ardently supported. The major goals of this association were (1) To abolish Primogeniture, (2) To institute a tax on the unearned increment of land, (3) To promote cooperative agriculture, (4) To nationalize all idle land. These papers are collected in Dissertations and Discussions, V, 226-294. With particular reference to the doctrine of taxation of unearned increment see pp. 230, 256, 278, 285, 293.

⁴Letters, II, 243.

Here again Mill's sensitivity to the necessity for social change is tempered by his experimental attitude. Although he recognized the impossibility of an immediate socialization of land, he felt the necessity for a trial of the principle of socialization not only as applied to land, but to property in general.

Lands not yet appropriated by individuals should, I think, by no means be allowed to pass into private ownership but should be sacred to public purposes, and made a means of trying all possible modes of collective management with a view of testing their practicability and the effects of those modes on the capabilities of collective management in general. It is well that there is such a resource for experimental purposes without meddling at all with private property in land until the advantage of doing so has been proved by sufficient trial.¹

It can be seen from the above pages, that Mill's distinction between socialism and private property is not as sharp as he himself thought it was. To insist upon "improved distribution and a large remuneration of labour as the two desiderata"² for an ideal society, is a strong departure from absolute individualism. The socialistic character of Mill's doctrine of private property is nowhere more clearly exhibited than in his sketch of the economic status of society when it has reached the stage of equilibrium.

We may suppose this better distribution of property attained by the joint effect of the prudence and frugality of individuals, and of a system of legislation favouring equality of fortunes, so far as it is consistent with the just claim of the individual to the fruits whether great or small of his or her own industry. We may suppose for instance a limitation of the sum which any one person may acquire by gift or inheritance to the amount sufficient to constitute a moderate independence. Under this two-fold influence, society would exhibit these leading features: a well paid and affluent body of labourers: no enormous fortunes except what were earned and accumulated during a single lifetime.³

Although Mill held what virtually amounted to a socialistic theory of private property, he disagreed completely with the socialistic arguments against competition. For Mill there seemed

¹Ibid., p. 352.

³Ibid., pp. 749 f.

²Principles, p. 752.

to be only two alternatives, competition and monopoly, and the latter seemed to be the more disadvantageous. Competition seemed to be the only answer to the "natural indolence of mankind." On this point Mill is emphatic.

Instead of looking upon competition as the baneful and anti-social principle which it is held to be by the generality of Socialists, I conceive that, even in the present state of society and industry, every restriction of it is an evil, and every extension of it, even if for the time injuriously affecting some class of labourers, is always an ultimate good. To be protected against competition is to be protected in idleness; to be saved the necessity of being as active and intelligent as other people¹

Mill's treatment of the socialistic solution to the economic problem in the Principles can now be summarized. Although the chief burden of his argument is a defense of private property, his conception of private property is such as to place him in the ranks of the socialists. It must be added that his early enthusiasm for socialistic experiments (which reached its heights in the edition of 1852) remained throughout the period which separated this edition from the later "Chapters on Socialism," to which one may turn for Mill's maturest thoughts on this subject.²

According to Mill's step-daughter, Helen Taylor, the "Chapters on Socialism," which are the fragmentary remains of a projected work on the subject, were written in 1869, although they were not published in the Fortnightly Review until 1879. Although incomplete, they at once express continuity with the doctrines of the Principles and skepticism in regard to the realization of so-

¹Ibid., pp. 793 f.

²The precise influences which played upon Mill and hence determined the variations in his thinking on socialism have been best tabulated in the three following works: (1) F. A. Lange, J. S. Mill's Ansichten über die soziale Frage (Duisburg: Falk und Lange, 1866), (2) Jean Lubac, J. S. Mill et le Socialisme (Paris: Girard et Briere, 1902), (3) Frieda Gotthelft, J. S. Mill's sozial-politische Wandlungen (München und Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, n. d.).

cialistic aims in the immediate future. Mill begins with a classification of the major socialist objections to the prevailing order of society. These are (1) The evil of private property (2) The fact that reward is by no means proportionate to labor and abstinence (3) The fact that success is due to birth, accident, and opportunity (4) The fact that crime is caused by idleness, poverty, and either lack of education or faulty education (5) The fact that individualism and competition are grounded on opposition of interest, struggle, and private war (6) The fact that competition destroys labor, small business, and eventuates in a monopoly by large capital.

Mill does not attempt to refute these objections systematically, but he does reply (1) that due to the increase of means of employing labor, the transportation of labor to new fields, and the improvement of intelligence and prudence of the population, wages are not really decreasing (2) that communism like the present system would still have to deal with the population problem (3) that although "businesses which require to be carried on by great joint-stock enterprises cannot be trusted to competition," but must be under state control, competition in general keeps down prices as well as wages and is not as harmful as the socialists claim, (4) that the profits of capitalists are not really exorbitant when the risk is considered. Mill concludes, "The evils and injustices suffered under the present system are great, but they are not increasing: on the contrary, the general tendency is toward their slow diminution."¹

From a consideration of the socialist objections to the contemporary order, mill passes to a critique of socialism itself. As in the Principles, Mill makes a distinction between two types

¹Fortnightly Review, XXV (1879), 382.

of socialism; the small-scale township cooperative proposed by Owen and Fourier, and the "continental" type involving a centralized planned economy.¹ His preference is strong for the former type.

The very idea of conducting the whole industry of a country by direction from a single centre is so obviously chimerical, that nobody ventures to propose any mode in which it shall be done.²

Here Mill's criticisms of socialism are slightly different from those contained in the Principles. He is now concerned with certain practical difficulties of socialistic management. Lack of personal incentive is a central problem since Mill admits that self-interest is a stronger motive than altruism. Mill had argued apropos of the claims of labor that there would never be an improvement in the status of the workers until there was a change in their intellectual and moral qualities. The same argument may be applied to socialistic or communistic proposals for the reorganization of society.

These proposals envisage a society of which the end is public benefit rather than private profit, and hence, according to Mill, they demand a type of personality in which altruism prevails over egoism.³ For this reason he believed that a collectivistic commonwealth was conditional upon the moral education of the masses. Writing in 1852 of his treatment of socialism in the third edition of the Principles he could state,

I certainly was far from intending that the statement it contained of the objections to the best-known Socialist extremes should be understood as a condemnation of Socialism regarded

¹Ibid., p. 512.

²Ibid., p. 525.

³See the Representative Government (Everyman ed.), pp. 208 f. ". . . . whenever it ceases to be true that mankind, as a rule, prefer themselves to others, and those nearest to them to those more remote, from that moment Communism is not only practicable, but the only defensible form of society"

as an ultimate result of human improvement, and further consideration has led me to attach much less weight than I then did even to those objections with one single exception -- the unprepared state of the labouring classes, and their extreme moral unfitness at present for the rights which Socialism would confer and the duties it would impose.¹

The "Chapters on Socialism" retains the idea that collectivism demands moral superiority,² and adds a willingness to experiment in order to determine whether this superiority is available.

Experiments alone can show whether there is as yet in any portion of the population a sufficiently high level of moral cultivation to make Communism succeed if communist associations show that they can be durable and prosperous, they will multiply and will probably be adopted by successive portions of the population of the more advanced countries as they become morally fitted for that mode of life. But to force unprepared populations into Communist societies even if a political revolution gave the power to make such an attempt, would end in disappointment.³

The tentativeness which had characterized the Principles in regard to the effect of socialism upon individual freedom had been supplanted by a more unfavorable attitude. Despite the fact that Mill indicates that under a socialistic regime not all aspects of life, but only productive resources would be socialized,⁴ he apparently thought that socialization and regulation would spread throughout the social structure and ultimately invade the, to him, sacred sphere of private life.

The obstacles to human progression are always great, and require a concurrence of favorable circumstances to overcome them, but an indispensable condition of their being overcome is that human nature should have freedom to expand spontaneously in various directions both in thought and practice But in Communist associations, private life would be brought in a most unexampled degree within the domain of public authority,

¹Letters, I, 168.

²"Communism to be successful requires a high standard of both moral and intellectual education in all the members of the community" Fortnightly Review, XXV, 522.

³Ibid., p. 523.

⁴Ibid., p. 515.

and there would be less scope for the development of individual character and individual preferences than as hitherto existed among the full citizens of any state belonging to the progressive branches of the human family.¹

This is almost sufficient to beg the issue of the outcome of socialist experiment. Mill's final conclusion in the "Chapters on Socialism" is that in the present state of society, socialistic institutions are not practical.² As a consequence, the idea of private property which "is not some one thing identical throughout history and incapable of alteration, but is variable like all other creations of the human mind"³ must be rehabilitated along the lines laid down in the Principles.

Although this last work of Mill's is less favorable to socialism than certain of his previous writings, the outcome of his economic works as a whole is the espousal of socialist principles. Mill does not always state these principles explicitly, and (as in the case of his doctrine of private property), seems on the surface to be frequently repudiating them. But more careful analysis will reveal that even where they are not clearly brought to the surface, Mill was groping for them.

It is now possible to indicate the general features of Mill's economic doctrines relative to social reconstruction. By establishing the distinction between laws of production and laws of distribution, Mill's political economy passed from the attempt to codify economic science to the construction of an economic theory which might serve as the basis for social policy. Hence his continuous sensitivity to problems of social reform. These problems seemed to orient themselves around the concept of inequality. This concept he developed in terms of the claims of labor,

¹Ibid., p. 522.

³Ibid., p. 529.

²Ibid., p. 526.

cooperatives, private property, and socialism.

In his treatment of the claims of labor, Mill states both that population control is demanded by the critical disproportion between the demand and supply of labor, and that a system of perfect competition requires labor to retain the right to organize for collective bargaining. And yet his most significant proposal comes not at the point where he attempts to patch up prevailing institutions, but where he states the need for institutional reorganization of production along the lines of cooperatives. Here is a principle to guide the social engineer. Important economic evils are generated by conflict of interest among the members of society, and must be resisted through the substitution of the principle of cooperation.¹

Mill's treatment of socialism significantly distinguishes between the distributive principle of absolute equality which is the basic feature of communism, and that of proportional equality which characterizes socialism of the Fourierist type. And the fact that Mill favors the latter leads to the enunciation of a second principle. The effective economic system will reward effort in proportion to its social service, and in its distributive machinery will substitute conditional compensation for absolute equality.²

Mill's comparisons of the relative advantages of socialism and the system of private property generally end on a note of uncertainty. This is due to his belief that a choice between them admits of only pragmatic and empirical determination. Here appears a third principle; the assertion of the experimental method in social affairs. Since there are a plurality of proposals at any

¹Supra, pp. 62-65.

²For principle of conditional compensation supra pp. 62 f., 65, 68, ff.

given time which claim to solve the economic problem, and since an arbitrary choice on the basis of personal bias or political expediency is unwarranted, choice should be made on the basis of social experiment. This is true for all possible proposals.¹

Here are three principles of Mill's economic theory. Just as the preceding chapter isolated three ethical principles of pleasure, calculation, and equality of opportunity, the present chapter purports to isolate three economic principles of cooperation, proportional distribution, and experimentation. In his ethical investigations Mill arrived at the previously stated principles, (1) The ultimate end of society is the production of a maximum amount of pleasurable feeling among its members (2) Pleasurable feelings are capable of rational calculation (3) All individuals should be given an equal opportunity to possess the means of happiness. In his economic theory Mill arrives at the following principles: (1) Important economic evils are generated by conflict of interest among the members of society, and must be resisted through the substitution of the principle of cooperation, (2) The effective economic system will reward effort in proportion to its social service, and in its distributive machinery will substitute conditional compensation for absolute equality (3) Since there are a plurality of proposals at any given time which claim to solve the economic problem, and since an arbitrary choice on the basis of personal bias or political expediency is unwarranted, choice should be made on the basis of social experiment.

¹Principles, p. 939. "Independently of all considerations of constitutional liberty, the best interests of the human race imperatively require that all economical experiments, voluntarily undertaken should have the fullest licence" Also supra, pp. 56, 68, 70 f., 74.

CHAPTER III

MILL'S POLITICAL DOCTRINES

"The question with respect to government," wrote James Mill in 1820, "is a question about the adaptation of means to an end."¹ Let this dictum of the father be the maxim through which we approach the political philosophy of the son.

In 1813 John Stuart Mill made the acquaintance of Bentham, and it is reasonable to suppose that as Benthamism was the intellectual climate of his home, he at this early age absorbed its principles. It was not, however, until his reading of Dumont in 1821 that his commitment was definite. From the first, not only the moral foundation which Bentham had constructed impressed Mill, but likewise the political applications which might be made upon this foundation.

Bentham had made an important distinction between private ethics and the art of legislation.² The source of this distinction was in Bentham's account of human motivation. Since psychological hedonism was its cardinal feature, a problem arose. If individuals pursue their own pleasures, private morality would reduce to the

¹James Mill, An Essay on Government, ed. Ernest Barker (Cambridge: The University Press, 1937), p. 1. This essay was originally printed as supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica in 1828.

²"Private ethics teaches how each man may dispose himself to pursue the course most conducive to his own happiness, by means of such motives as offer of themselves: the act of legislation . . . teaches how a multitude of men, composing a community, may be disposed to pursue that course which upon the whole is the most conducive to the happiness of the whole community, by means of motives to be applied by the legislation." Principles of Morals and Legislation (Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1907), p. 323.

exercise of individual prudence. But Bentham did not believe that a beneficent nature would ensure the coincidence of private pleasure and public good. Since individual and social welfare might conflict, some device was necessary to compel individuals to act for the public good. The coercive use of sanctions was the instrument which Bentham relied upon for this purpose, and hence he left to the legislator the control of the social body. The Benthamite contribution to Mill's philosophy of politics was the conception of the sphere of government as the sphere of external controls.

But this conception of the sphere of government itself involved a difficulty. For even if it is necessary for society to be subject to legislative manipulation, those to whom the manipulation is entrusted are themselves members of society. The Benthamite notion that the social body is to be molded into conformity with the requirements of the principle of utility, is subject to the criticism that those who invoke coercive sanctions are themselves human beings whose motivation is as egoistic as that of the subordinate social body. This is in essence the problem of political authority which Bentham bequeathed to James Mill, and which the latter exploited in his Essay on Government. This essay because of its early date and systematic character may serve as a point of orientation for John Stuart Mill's political beliefs at this time.

The end to which James Mill made politics the means is of course the greatest happiness of the greatest number. The means of attaining the end of government is the power exercised by the agents of government. Since these agents are only a small proportion of the social body, and the power which they exercise is in some sense absolute, the great problem of political authority arises. Because the power of rulers is only legitimized by the

ends which society acknowledges, society must be protected through the possession of guarantees against the abuse of power.¹

The basic problem of politics is the relationship of power and interest. This problem raises the issue of alternative methods of political control. The issue between dictatorship, oligarchy, or democracy is whether government by one, the few, or the many is most competent to achieve the end of utility. On this point James Mill is clear. Government should aim at social welfare; and governmental efficiency is only secured by the concentration of power and responsibility. Yet of the political alternatives, democracy is best fitted to achieve the end of government since it is the only form which allows the direct consultation of the interests of society. The need for political centralization must be resisted whenever it tends to transform democracy into oligarchy. The difficulty of political organization on a large scale is the inevitable differentiation of the rulers and the ruled. But this difficulty can be obviated to the extent that the power of the former be held contingent upon the will of the latter. This is why the best instrument of political democracy is representative government.²

If it be granted that centralization of power needs to be checked, and that this check must express the general will, a legislative body representative of this general will will be best for this purpose. This body must have power as well as interests identical with the social body. The most urgent requirement for representative assemblies is that there shall exist a coincidence of interest between them and the community at large.³

I have dwelt upon the Essay on Government because it represents admirably John Stuart Mill's own conception of governmental

¹James Mill, op. cit., pp.6 f.

³Ibid., p. 35.

²Ibid., p. 34.

principles at this time. It is also important for a more fundamental reason. The contents of the Essay on Government only indicates indirectly the method of its composition. James Mill's acknowledged foundation was the egoistic psychology of Bentham. His purpose was to draw the principles of government from this psychology. His self-confessed method in political thinking was "deduction from acknowledged laws of human nature."¹

It was inevitable that this method should be attacked. The most noted of these attacks, and the one which was subsequently to have the most vital effect upon the thinking of John Stuart Mill was the famous article of Macaulay appearing in 1829 in the Edinburgh Review.² After referring to James Mill as "an Aristotelian of the fifteenth century born out of due season,"³ Macaulay proceeded to argue that deduction as a method in political science could issue only in a barren scholasticism, and that the inductive method should be substituted for it.

How then are we to arrive at just conclusions on a subject so important to the happiness of mankind? Surely by that method which in every experimental science to which it has been applied has signally increased the power and knowledge of our species - by that method for which our new philosophers would substitute quibbles scarcely worthy of the barbarous respondents and opponents of the middle ages - by the method of induction: by observing the present state of the world, - by assiduously studying the history of past ages, by sifting the evidence of facts, by carefully combining and contrasting those which are authentic, by generalizing with judgment and diffidence, by perpetually bringing the theory which we have constructed to the test of new facts, by correcting, or altogether abandoning it, according as those new facts prove it to be partially or fundamentally unsound. Proceeding thus, patiently, diligently, candidly, we may hope to form a system as far inferior in pretension to that which we have been examining, and as far superior to it in real utility, as the prescriptions of a great physician, varying with every stage of every malady, and with the constitution of every patient, to the pill of the

¹Ibid., p. 24.

²T. B. Macaulay, "The Utilitarian Theory of Government," Edinburgh Review, Vol. XLIX (1829).

³Ibid., p. 161.

advertising quack which is to cure all human beings in all climates of all diseases.¹

The Edinburgh Review article of Macaulay had a profound effect upon the political philosophy of John Stuart Mill. For it brought to a head Mill's latent dissatisfaction with the Essay on Government. Prior to 1829, although accepting the basic framework of the political theory of Bentham and James Mill, he had become aware of certain deficiencies in the theory, although he had repudiated attacks similar to Macaulay's. Still, Mill was dissatisfied with the manner in which his father made light of Macaulay's attack, and he concludes, "This made me think that there was really something more fundamentally erroneous in my father's conception of philosophical method, as applicable to politics, than I had hitherto supposed there was."²

Macaulay's essay sensitized Mill to the problem of method in political science. It did more than that. It also led him to a systematic questioning of the political theory of his father and Bentham. The period between 1829 when he read Macaulay's essay, and 1840 when he wrote Book VI of the System of Logic, "M. de Tocqueville on Democracy in America," and "Coleridge" found Mill concerned with two distinct enterprises. He was trying (1) to elucidate an adequate methodology for the science of politics and the "moral sciences" in general, and (2) to reconstruct the principles of government on a Benthamite foundation, while avoiding the errors of his father.

The precise change which reading Macaulay's article worked in Mill's political philosophy is not clear. However, by his own

¹Ibid., pp. 188 f.

²Autobiography (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), p. 111.

evidence, his interest shifted from advocacy of specific institutional changes to consideration of the principles of political organization.¹ The principles which he considered of greatest importance can be derived from the "Bentham" of 1838.

There are three great questions in government. First, To what authority is it for the good of the people that they should be subject? Secondly, How are they to be induced to obey that authority? The answers to these two questions vary indefinitely, according to the degree and kind of civilization and cultivation already attained by a people, and their peculiar aptitudes for receiving more. Comes next a third question, not liable to so much variation; namely, By what means are the abuses of this authority to be checked? This third question is the only one of the three to which Bentham seriously applies himself; and he gives it the only answer it admits of, Responsibility: responsibility to persons whose interest, whose obvious and recognizable interest, accords with the end in view, good government.²

It is doubtful whether this analysis does justice to the political theory of Bentham, but it does indicate that for Mill as for his father, the real crux of political theory is security through identification of interests between rulers and ruled. Although in minor disagreement with Bentham, Mill is quick to point out his genuine merit as a political philosopher.

Do we, then consider Bentham's political speculations useless? Far from it. We consider them only one-sided. He has brought out into a strong light, has cleared from a thousand confusions and misconceptions, and pointed out with admirable skill the best means of promoting one of the ideal qualities of a perfect government - identity of interest between the trustees and the community for whom they hold their power in trust.³

I have singled out the argument of coincidence of political interest because although Mill later came to minimize its importance,⁴ it is the connecting link between the political theory of the Utilitarians and his own.

¹Ibid., p. 113.

²"Bentham," Dissertations and Discussions (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1873), I, 401 f.

³Ibid., p. 407.

⁴Autobiography, p. 111.

And it could be argued that it is implicit in, and fundamental to the insights subsequently expressed as late as the Representative Government. This argument is stated (and hence the continuity between the political doctrine of James Mill and Bentham, and John Stuart Mill is clearly exhibited), in John Stuart Mill's review "The Rationale of Political Representation" published in the London Review, July, 1835.¹

From the principle of the necessity of identifying the interest of the government with that of the people, most of the practical maxims of a representative government are corollaries. All popular institutions are means toward rendering the identity of interest more complete.²

Although the necessity for coincidence of interest between society and its governors is a part of the democratic method of social control, it is not the only requisite of good government. Self-interest, coinciding with the interest of the community may be a necessity of political action, but for such action there must be competence as well as will. Self-interest is to motivate, but intelligence must direct political conduct. This implies that there is a second essential for good government, namely, rule by the well-educated few rather than the uninstructed many. This raises an issue of democratic government to whose answer Mill's life-long enterprise in political theory was directed.

The grand difficulty in politics will for a long time be how best to conciliate the two great elements on which good government depends; to combine the greatest amount of the advantage derived from the independent judgment of a specially instructed few with the greatest degree of the security for rectitude of purpose derived from rendering those few responsible to the many.³

¹Quotations from this article will be taken from the crucial passages reprinted as appendix to the following: Dissertations and Discussions, Vol. I.

²Ibid., p. 418.

³Ibid., p. 420.

However, at this time Mill minimized the difficulty referred to. 'To combine right motivation and intelligence in the officers of government requires not that the community exist at a high intellectual level, but that it have sufficient insight to appoint as its political representatives those who do.

It is not necessary that the many should themselves be perfectly wise: it is sufficient if they be duly sensible of the value of superior wisdom. It is sufficient if they be aware that the majority of political questions turn upon considerations of which they, and all persons not trained for the purpose, must necessarily be very imperfect judges; and that their judgment must in general be exercised rather upon the characters and talents of the persons whom they appoint to decide these questions for them, than upon the questions themselves.¹

The principle of coincidence of interest led directly to the consideration of democratic government. But in Mill's articles prior to 1835 there had been no formal treatment of democracy. In the year 1835, however, occurred an event of real importance for Mill's political thinking;² Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy In America was published, and fell into his hands. Shortly afterwards appeared in the London Review³ "De Tocqueville On Democracy In America" which represented Mill's first critique of the principles of democratic government.

Repeating de Tocqueville's idea that the increase in literacy had increased social communication and thus made democratic government possible, Mill agreed that democracy was a permanent institution, and addressed himself to the problem how it might be strengthened.⁴

The most important result of reading de Tocqueville was

¹Ibid., p. 421.

²Autobiography, p. 134.

³J. S. Mill, "De Tocqueville On Democracy In America," London Review, Vol. XXVI (1836).

⁴Ibid., p. 93.

that it enabled Mill to formulate a distinction between true and false democracy. De Tocqueville had pointed out two fundamental disadvantages of democratic government; (1) its electoral procedure caused more hasty formulation and shorter duration of public policy than in an aristocracy, (2) the frequent lack of correspondence between the interest of the state and the interest of the majority, plus the sovereignty of the latter, tended toward a tyrannical abuse of power at the expense of all legitimate minorities. Mill admitted the seriousness of these two charges, but denied their relevance to the type of democracy which he himself upheld.

The evils which M. de Tocqueville represents as incident to democracy, can only exist in so far as the people entertain an erroneous idea of what democracy ought to be. If the people entertained the right idea of democracy, the mischief of hasty and unskilled legislation would not exist; and the omnipotence of the majority would not be attended with any evils.¹

This "right idea of democracy" is that of a democracy founded on the principle of coincidence of interest secured by guarantees stipulated in James Mill's Essay On Government.

The idea of a rational democracy is, not that the people themselves govern, but that they have security for good government. This security they cannot have by any other means than by retaining in their own hands the ultimate control. If they renounce this; they give themselves up to tyranny. A governing class not accountable to the public are sure in the main, to sacrifice the people to the pursuit of separate interests and inclinations of their own In no government will the interests of the people be the object except where the people are able to dismiss their rulers as soon as the devotion of those rulers to the interests of the people becomes questionable.²

In the "Rationale of Political Representation," Mill had insisted not only upon the democratic requirement of a coincidence of interest between ruler and ruled, but upon the necessity for intelligence in the rulers. In "De Tocqueville On Democracy In America" he reiterates the plea for intelligent leadership.³

¹Ibid., p. 109.

³Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 110

Mill possessed sympathies divided between democracy and aristocracy. Admitting the claims of the former to secure an identity of interests within society, he realized the value of the latter for wise and efficient leadership. The difficulty of combining these two now receives attention.

But in government as in everything else, the danger is, lest those who can do whatever they will, may will to do more than is for their ultimate interest. The interest of the people is to choose for their rulers the most instructed and ablest persons who can be found, and having done so, to allow them to exercise their knowledge and ability for the good of the people freely, or with the least possible control - as long as it is the good of the people and not some private end that they are aiming at. A democracy thus administered would unite all the good qualities ever possessed by any government. Not only would its ends be good, but its means would be as well chosen as the wisdom of the age would allow; and the omnipotence of the majority would be exercised through the agency and at the discretion of an enlightened minority accountable to the majority in the last resort.¹

This sets the distinction between true and false democracy. False democracy is that in which the determination of public policy rests with the electorate itself, and those chosen to represent the electorate are a sampling of the field. Officers of government are not qualitatively different from, but reproduce in miniature the composition of society. Executive and legislative officers are mere delegates and passively reflect the interests of those who have elected them. Delegative democracy is based upon the assumption that society as a whole can formulate social policy. Mill's denial of this assumption is at the bottom of his repudiation of delegative democracy.

The grounds for this denial are clearly stated. The construction of social policy demands both ethical insights and scientific social knowledge. Whatever society's capacity for the former, its inability to assimilate the latter is obvious. Mill's argument, although somewhat prolix, is worthy of complete quotation.

¹Ibid., p. 111.

Some persons, and persons too whose desire for enlightened government cannot be questioned, do not take so serious a view of this perversion of the true idea of an enlightened democracy. They say, it is well that the many should evoke all political questions to their own tribunal, and decide them according to their own judgment, because their philosophers will be compelled to enlighten the multitude, and render them capable of appreciating their more profound views. No one can attach greater value than we do to this consequence of popular government, so far as we believe it capable of being realized: and the argument would be irresistible if, in order to instruct the people, all that is requisite were to will it; if it were only the discovery of political truths which required study and wisdom, and the evidences of them, when discovered, could be made apparent at once to any person of common sense as well educated as every individual in the community might and ought to be. But the fact is not so. Many of the truths of politics (in political economy, for instance) are the result of a concatenation of propositions, the very first steps of which, no one, who has not gone through a course of study is prepared to concede: There are others, to have a complete perception of which requires much meditation and experience of human nature. How will philosophers bring these home to the perceptions of the multitude? Can they enable common sense to judge of science, or inexperience of experience? Every one who has even crossed the threshold of political philosophy knows that on many of its questions, the false view is greatly the most plausible and a large portion of its truths are, and must always remain to all but those who have specially studied them paradoxes; as contrary in appearance to common sense as the proposition that the earth moves round the sun. The multitude will never believe those truths until tendered to them from an authority in which they have as unlimited confidence as they have in the unanimous voice of astronomers on a question of astronomy. That they should have no such confidence at present is no discredit to them; for where are the persons who are entitled to it? But we are well satisfied that it will be given, as soon as knowledge shall have made sufficient progress among the instructed classes themselves to produce something like a general agreement in their opinions on the leading points of moral and political doctrine.¹

Here Mill expresses a double pessimism; (1) relevant to the competence of society to formulate policy on the basis of available evidence from the social sciences, (2) relevant to the competence of social scientists to assemble evidence for the guidance of social action. The second is indicative of Mill's recognition of the ultimately practical character of problems in the methodology of social science. The first is sufficient to impair the principle of delegative democracy.

¹Ibid., p. 111, n.

If then, as de Tocqueville had intimated, there seem to be serious defects in the application of the democratic principle, it is because the false pattern of delegation rather than the true pattern of representation has been copied.

If democracy should disappoint any of the expectations of its more enlightened partisans, it will be from the substitution of delegation for representation; of the crude and necessarily superficial judgment of the people themselves, for the judgment of those whom the people, having confidence in their honesty, have selected as the wisest guardians whose services they could command.¹

Mill's distinction between true and false democracy seems to meet de Tocqueville's first criticism, but not so adequately his second. Even representative democracy does not guarantee that the rights of minorities will be respected. However, it is questionable whether de Tocqueville's second objection applies exclusively to democracy at all. The protection of minorities is not essentially a question of political organization, but of the moral quality of a people. Persecution for race, religion or belief is not primarily dependent upon whether people live under a democracy or an aristocracy, but upon the level of education prevailing within the society.² Tolerance is not basically a political precipitate but a moral residue.

This conception is important since it exhibits Mill's slow transition from the institutionalism of Bentham and James Mill to the more personalized and moralistic perspective which was characteristically his own. It emphasizes the role of education in politics. Mill would have admitted that there can be institutionalized safeguards of the civil liberties of minorities. One of these is the law. The legal mentality (with its fondness for precision of statement, precedent, and tradition) serves as a natural correc-

¹Ibid., p. 118.

²Ibid., p. 119.

tive for the political impetuosity of democracy: an impetuosity which may be willing to suspend the rights of minorities in favor of temporary social need.¹ But the most efficient safeguard of civil liberty is an educated electorate. By distinguishing between delegative and representative democracy, Mill was not denying absolutely the policy-formulating rights of society. He was merely insisting that in his contemporary society the many were not capable of political wisdom. This situation he considered merely temporary, and as itself indicating the necessity of preparing the majority for active participation in government.²

Thus far I have attempted to elucidate Mill's political philosophy as it grew out of the Benthamite theory exemplified in his father's Essay On Government, and as it was modified under the influence of de Tocqueville. But as I have previously pointed out, in this period Mill is concerned with a double enterprise. His political theory, culminating in his critique of democracy, represented the development of but one of two interests. The other was the attempt to lay a logical foundation for those social sciences without which he considered wise political leadership impossible. This period falls between the reading of Macaulay's Edinburgh Review article of 1829, and the completion of the final book of the System of Logic in 1840.

Mill's interest in the methodology of social science was ultimately practical. In his early political theory he had delegated authority in formulating social policy to qualified political leaders rather than the uneducated masses, but the problem of adequate political planning was not thereby solved. However narrowed the responsibility, the necessity for competent decision remained. Social policy involves the exercise of judgment, and one of the

¹Ibid., p. 124.

²Ibid., p. 125.

controls of social judgment might be the generalizations which ought to form the body of social science. But can social science fabricate valid generalizations of this character? Does the universal law of causation apply to moral as well as physical science? Does that generality, constancy, necessity which obtains in physics extend into the realm of psychics? Is it possible (by making the Comtian assumption that the methods of social science are the methods of science in general) to apply the methods of physical science to the phenomena of morals and social action? This is the problem of Book VI of the System of Logic.

The previous five books of the System of Logic¹ had been devoted to outlining "a connected view of the principles of evidence and the methods of scientific investigation." But the fact that as early as 1840 moral science had not emerged from its philosophic matrix raised the question of causation as applied to human acts. Insofar as social phenomena involve human choice and depend upon the exercise of will, it is important to inquire in what sense they are subject to "necessary" determination. This is to raise the issue of "liberty" vs. "necessity."

Correctly conceived, the doctrine called Philosophical Necessity is simply this; that given the motives which are present to an individual's mind, and given likewise the character and disposition of the individual, the manner in which he will act might be unerringly inferred: that if we knew the person thoroughly and knew all the inducements which are acting upon him, we could foretell his conduct with as much certainty as we can predict any physical event.²

Stated in this fashion, Mill finds it impossible to deny the existence of necessity in human action. Mill continues the Humian tradition; for him causation does not mean active production with its implication of irresistibility, but merely "uniformity of

¹John Stuart Mill, A System of Logic (8th ed., New York: Harper & Bros., 1874).

²Ibid., pp. 581 f.

order and capability of being predicted." And the phrase "capability of being predicted" refers to a possible rather than an actual situation. Given knowledge of principles, elements, milieu, human action is predictable. But can such knowledge ever reach sufficient completeness to guarantee predictive adequacy? This leads to the question whether "there is or may be a science of human nature?"

According to Mill, the various confusions which have arisen in the attempt to answer this question are due to ambiguity in the term "scientific." The degree of certainty of scientific propositions differs widely. Refinements in theory have made astronomy relatively exact, the inaccessibility of secondary causes to accurate observation has made the science of the tides much less so, while prediction of meteorological phenomena is highly uncertain and inaccurate. Using this scale, the science of human nature is analogous to the science of the tides; the basic generalizations have been made, the broad empirical laws have been isolated, but the situations to which these laws may be applied are so complex that predictive accuracy is not to be expected.¹ This does not render practically useless such generalizations as may emerge from social science. Even if they are incapable of application to individuals, when used statistically, their predictive value increases.

¹"But the impressions and actions of human beings are not solely the result of their present circumstances, but the joint result of those circumstances and of the characters of the individuals; and the agencies which determine human character are so numerous and diversified . . . that in the aggregate they are never in any two cases exactly similar. Hence even if our science of human nature were theoretically perfect, that is, if we could calculate any character as we can calculate the orbit of any planet from given data; still as the data are never all given, nor ever precisely alike in different cases, we could neither make positive predictions nor lay down universal propositions." *Ibid.*, p. 588.

Inasmuch, however, as many of those effects which it is of most importance to render amenable to human foresight and control are determined, like the tides, in an incomparably greater degree by general causes, than by all partial causes taken together; depending in the main on those circumstances and qualities which are common to all mankind, or at least to large bodies of them, and only in a small degree on the idiosyncrasies of organization or the peculiar history of individuals; it is evidently possible with regard to all such effects, to make predictions which will almost always be verified, and general propositions which are almost always true. And whenever it is sufficient to know how the great majority of the human race or of some nation or class of persons will think, feel, and act, these propositions are equivalent to universal ones. For the purposes of political and social science this is sufficient. As we formerly remarked, an approximate generalization is, in social inquiries, for most practical purposes equivalent to an exact one; that which is only probable when asserted of individual human beings indiscriminately selected, being certain when affirmed of the character and collective conduct of masses.¹

The empirical generalizations of social science can only be accounted rough approximations. In order to establish their scientific character it is necessary to formally deduce them from "laws of nature."

The science of Human Nature may be said to exist in proportion as the approximate truths, which compose a practical knowledge of mankind, can be exhibited as corollaries from the universal laws of human nature on which they rest.

Mill never seriously doubted either that "pure mental philosophy" (exemplified in the epistemology of Hume), was a legitimate science, or that it had reached its point of highest development in his father's Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human-Mind. This science, which Mill calls psychology, treats of "the uniformities of succession, the laws, whether ultimate or derivative, according to which one mental state succeeds another. These are the "Laws of Association."

According to Mill, psychology yields generalizations basic for the construction of subordinate sciences of human nature, and these generalizations are empirical. Mill distinguishes two types

¹Ibid., p. 589.

of scientific laws, empirical laws which describe uniformities according to observations, and the "really scientific truths" which are causal laws by means of which these empirical propositions can be coordinated and explained.¹ The point is that the laws of psychology, although empirically established are constantly in process of being transformed into causal explanations. At this point we pass from psychology to Mill's second science in the hierarchy, ethology.

Ethology differs from psychology in two important respects. It is more concrete in its matter, and it is derivative and causal rather than empirical and ultimate in its form. Ethology is the science of character formation or as we should say the science of personality. Personality has both principles and elements. Whereas psychology is the study of the generalized field of sense-contents, ethology attempts to apply the principles of psychology to the milieu within which personality operates. Ethology is social psychology.

Psychology deals with the continuity of mental states; ethology deals with the laws of individual behavior insofar as they are conditioned by a social environment; the final science of the hierarchy, "Social Science" proper, deals with the "actions of collective masses of mankind, and the various phenomena which constitute social life."

I have previously stated that Book VI of the System of Logic is best understood not as a merely theoretical treatment of methodological problems of the moral sciences, but as an attempt to work out the principles of a scientific politics. The problem had been manifested in the Macaulay-James Mill controversy of 1829. Now, in Chapters VII-X of the sixth book of the System

¹Ibid., pp. 597 ff.

of Logic, with the aid of Comte's analysis of the science of society, Mill gives his solution to the problem of social method.

Mill contends that neither the method of politics proposed by Macaulay or by his father, James Mill, is adequate; that both the "Experimental or Chemical mode" of the former and the "Abstract or Geometrical mode" of the latter are inappropriate for study of social phenomena with a view to the extraction of maxims of practice.

The difficulty with the experimental method of Macaulay is that its reasoning is exclusively ad hoc; that it distrusts political generalizations. All political reasoning, it holds, must be grounded on the Baconian method of simple experience.¹ But there are two reasons why this method is unsuited to social science. In the first place the social order is merely an aggregate.

Human beings in society have no properties but those which are derived from, and may be resolved into, the laws of the nature of individual man. In social phenomena the Composition of Causes is the universal law.²

The science of society is logically posterior to the science of the individual, and stands to it in a relation of deductive dependence. In the second place, social science by its very nature is non-experimental. The utilization of a laboratory technique, the construction of artificial conditions, and the institution of scientific controls is impossible where large aggregates of men

¹Mill's language shows him to be replying directly to Macaulay's Edinburgh Review article with an irony whose eleven year survival indicates the depth of its influence upon him. ". . . persons who, having sufficient acquaintance with books, and with the current ideas to have heard that Bacon taught mankind to follow experience, and to ground their conclusions on facts instead of metaphysical dogmas, think that by treating political facts in as directly experimental a method as chemical facts, they are showing themselves true Baconians, and proving their adversaries to be mere syllogizers and school-men." Ibid., p. 609.

²Ibid., p. 608.

and whole social systems are the subject of experiment. When societies and the laws of their functioning are in question, plurality and composition of causes makes impossible utilization of the ordinary inductive methods.¹

The method pursued by James, Mill, while by no means as unsophisticated as that of Macaulay, is likewise inappropriate. In opposition to Macaulay it rightfully concludes that politics must be a deductive science, but for its pattern it turns to the science of geometry. Now, it is characteristic of geometry that merely logical relations obtain between its propositions. The ordering of geometric propositions must be based upon the concept of generality. If a science of society is to utilize the geometric method, it too must order its axioms in terms of generality, and must begin with a single axiom of maximum generality. This is precisely the method which characterized the "interest-philosophy" of James Mill and the Benthamite school, and had been formerly accepted by Mill himself. Mill proceeds to criticize it.

This account of political action asserts three principles of descending generality (1) Human beings are primarily motivated in their political behavior by personal interests, (2) therefore good government can only be secured through a coincidence of interest of ruler and ruled, and (3) this coincidence can only be produced through the responsibility of the rulers to the governed. The first and third of these principles, Mill now categorically denies, and the arguments which he uses to support this denial are drawn directly from Macaulay's Edinburgh Review article of

¹" the closest imitation which can be made in the social sciences, of a legitimate induction from direct experience, gives but a specious semblance of conclusiveness, without any real value." Ibid., p. 611.

1829.¹ The point is not that Mill is repudiating the interest theory of politics, but that he is using its untenability as illustrative of the failure of the geometric method. The difficulty with the egoistic premise of Bentham and James Mill is that it is partial. Because "the phenomena of society do not depend in essentials on some one agency or law of human nature," the abstract geometrical method is as inapplicable as the experimental.

The true method of social science is analogous neither to chemistry nor geometry, but to physics; it is deductive, but concrete and pluralistic. The laws of social action can be directly inferred from the principles of psychology and ethology. But the sociological laws thus derived are established not merely by determining whether they are logically deduced, but by the degree to which they square with observation. The direct deductive method consists in inference from previously established propositions, verified by experience.

The deductions of social science cannot yield "positive predictions" but only "tendencies." Although causal influences can be inferred in the application of psychological principles to concrete situations, neither their exact character nor the extent of counteracting causes can be accurately estimated. But Mill repeats a recurrent theme. "Knowledge insufficient for prediction may be most valuable for guidance." Absolute certainty is not necessary as a foundation for social planning and social control.

It is not necessary for the wise conduct of the affairs of society, no more than of anyone's private concerns that we should be able to foresee infallibly the results of what we do. We must seek our objects by means which may perhaps be defeated, and take precautions against dangers which possibly may never be realized. The aim of practical politics is to surround any given society with the greatest possible number of circumstances

¹Ibid., p. 617. Note however how the criticism is softened by the lengthy passage on the following page.

of which the tendencies are beneficial, and to remove or counteract as far as practicable those of which the tendencies are injurious. A knowledge of the tendencies only, though without the power of accurately predicting their conjunct result, gives us to a considerable extent this power.¹

The assertion that social science utilizes the physical or direct deductive method needs qualification. Is "social science" a single body of doctrine, or is it a study covering a series of sciences separate from one another? It seems clear from observation of the range of human activities that there are "different species of social facts," and that they "are in the main dependent . . . on different kinds of causes; and therefore not only may with advantage, but must be studied apart."² The classical example is political economy. This science begins with the delimitation of a particular field of social action, and treats it with reference to a single psychological assumption. Insofar as it utilizes the deductive method it is geometric, but that its conclusions are referred for verification to the realm of fact makes it a clear example of the physical method outlined above.

In regard to other social sciences this is not so clear. Political ethnology, the science of national character, is a case in point. For this science deals with principles which are implied in all other social generalizations. This seems to indicate that a study like government, which could never be independent of the conditions of national character is not like political economy, but depends upon a general science of society. Whereas the direct deductive or physical method has been shown to be appropriate for those sciences separable from the general science of society, it remains to determine whether such a method is appropriate for this general science. There is evidence to indicate that it is not.

¹Ibid., p. 621.

²Ibid., p. 623.

The analysis of society has two departments.¹ One may investigate the manner in which the various elements of a society are interrelated at a fixed time, or one may determine the pattern of changing social states. Science is the exhibition of the uniformity of phenomena, and in society there may be uniformities of co-existence and succession.

But the uniformities of co-existence obtaining among phenomena which are effects of causes, must be corollaries from the laws of causation by which these phenomena are really determined. The mutual correlation between the different elements of each state of society is therefore, a derivative law resulting from the laws which regulate the succession between one state of society and another.²

At this point we pass from mere description to historical analysis. By historical analysis is meant more than the mere notation of the succession of epochs of a society. Such notation forms the data for analysis, but the "facts" of history must be subjected to close study in order that from them may emerge a body of interpretative theory. The study of history as social science has as its aim the passage from individual uniqueness to scientific universality.

It is apparent that historical laws are genuinely inductive and not mere inferences from principles. And so it seems that general social science abandons the deductive method. However, this is not the case. The generalizations of history, are not laws of nature, but empirical principles. To convert them into causal laws one must return to deduction. To make clear that empirical generalizations are themselves based upon causal laws, it is necessary to demonstrate that they coincide with deductions from the laws of psychology and ethology. This constitutes their veri-

¹The distinction which Mill now develops between social statics and social dynamics is (as indeed can be said for all of Chapters X, XI of the System of Logic), a mere appropriation of the insights of Comte.

²System of Logic, p. 631.

fication.¹ It now becomes clear that there are two methods possible for social science. If social science is divided into parts like political economy, its method is that of physics. It deduces from postulates theorems which may be inductively verified. Whereas if social science be conceived as general, its method is historical and its inductions may be verified deductively.

Thus far we have been concerned with Mill's treatment of the methodology of social science. Mill concludes that social science is possible, and that through the historical or inverse deductive method, social laws may be isolated. It must be repeated that the discussion has been pursued by Mill with the practical purpose of giving validity to a body of knowledge about society which might be utilized in the formation of social policy. This raises a difficulty. If laws of society are descriptions of invariant patterns of historical succession, in what sense could their operation be limited or their consequences avoided by those interested in the guidance of society? Are not the two concepts of prediction and control incompatible? Mill answers this question according to his theory of social causation.

The theory of the subjection of social progress to invariable laws, is often held in conjunction with the doctrine, that social progress can not be materially influenced by the exertions of individual persons, or by the acts of governments. But though these opinions are often held by the same persons, they are two very different opinions and the confusion between them is the eternally recurring error of confounding Causation with Fatalism. Because whatever happens will be the effect of causes, human volitions among the rest, it does not follow that volitions, even those of peculiar individuals, are not of great efficacy as causes.²

Mill is able to retain social control by denying accurate prediction. There is a difference between social and natural laws in that the former take into consideration human volition. The moral

¹Ibid., p. 634.

²Ibid., p. 648.

sciences treat of phenomena of mind, and because of their complexity phenomena of mind are more amenable to control. The laws which social science may isolate do not state categorically the rules of social activity, they merely indicate certain trends. Mill, following Comte, does admit that measures adopted for social control must depend upon the validity of the laws of social statics and dynamics upon which they are grounded. Social control functions to accelerate a trend or to create agencies which might counteract its undesirable consequences.¹ It is at this point, where prediction engenders control, that sociology becomes the art of politics.

Prediction of the actions of society is a science; social control is an art. Prediction is grounded in descriptive propositions, control is defined with reference to norms.² Despite the difference between art and science, the two are related. Art, which is the source of norms, can only implement these norms by basing rules of practice upon the factual propositions of science. Ethics is the art corresponding to the sciences of human nature and society. But what of social policy? Social policy is the concern of the legislator, and represents the attempt to apply knowledge given in social science toward the achievement of the ultimate value elucidated in ethical speculation. The legislator only allows himself to be determined by rules which are reasonable or well grounded.³ But judgments as to the rationality of social policy are themselves controlled from two directions, the normative and the factual. The legislator must combine the insights of the

¹Ibid., p. 643.

²Mill's distinction between science and art as the distinction between a body of descriptive and normative propositions has already been emphasized in Chapter I (supra, p. 9).

³System of Logic, p. 653.

ethicist and the social scientist.

The relationship between ethics, social science and social policy can now be stated. Ethics in the sense in which Mill uses the term, the sense exemplified in the Utilitarianism, is the art which originates ends, which gives status to ultimate value. Sociology in the generalized Comtian sense which Mill employs, is the science which yields propositions descriptive of social action. Politics, legislation, or whatever that activity be called which determines social policy, is the art which uses science to prescribe means to be applied to the end received from the more ultimate art of ethics.¹ Legislation must not only be moral, but scientific. Social policy, to be effective, must be grounded in social science. It was out of this profound conviction that Mill in 1830 turned aside from analysis of the principles of politics to validate the moral sciences which he considered essential for the formation of social policy.

The years immediately following the System of Logic were spent by Mill in an abortive attempt to create a science of social psychology (ethology). When he had been disillusioned by this attempt, he turned in 1848 to the Principles of Political Economy. As the source of Mill's economic doctrines, this work has been treated in the previous chapter. The last book of the Principles "On the Influence of Government" again turned Mill's attention to the principles of politics. In this chapter as well as in the Liberty of 1859, Mill made certain contributions to political theory which are in the main echoed in the later Representative Government.

Meanwhile political conditions in England were having their effect upon Mill. The imminent passage of the second Reform Bill of 1859 inspired two articles, one a pamphlet "Thoughts on Parlia-

¹Ibid., p. 657.

mentary Reform," the other a review "Recent Writers on Reform" appearing in Fraser's Magazine, two months after the publication of the first.¹ These two works discussed certain techniques of government such as plural voting, universal suffrage, and the Hare plan for proportional representation, recently introduced and enthusiastically sponsored by Mill.

Both of these works were ventures in practical politics, written in response to a need manifested in the English political scene of 1859. They contained proposals for immediate parliamentary reform. But although these proposals were practical in nature, it seemed that they could be justified theoretically as corollaries from principles of political philosophy. In composing the two strongly polemic articles of 1859, Mill must have become aware of the need for a new synthesis of his political doctrines. The year 1860 was largely given over to the composition of this synthesis, and in 1861 appeared the famous culmination of his political speculations, the Representative Government.²

At the very threshold of the Representative Government, Mill raises an issue crucial to all discussions of political planning, "To what extent are forms of government a matter of choice?" Mill points out that to this question there are two major answers. The first is equivalent to the old position of Bentham and James Mill.

By some minds government is conceived as strictly a practical art, giving rise to no questions but those of means and an end. Forms of government are assimilated to any other expedients for the attainment of human objects. They are regarded as wholly an affair of invention and contrivance. Being made by man, it is assumed that man has the choice either to make them or not, and how or what pattern they shall be made. Government accor-

¹Both of these are to be found in Dissertations and Discussions, Vol. IV.

²J. S. Mill, Representative Government (Everyman ed., New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1929).

ding to this conception is a problem, to be worked like any other question of business. The first step is to define the purposes which governments are required to promote. The next is to inquire what form of government is best fitted to fulfill those purposes. Having satisfied ourselves on these two points, and ascertained the form of government which combines the greatest amount of good with the least of evil, what further remains is to obtain the concurrence of our countrymen or those for whom the institutions are intended in the opinion which we have privately arrived at. To find the best form of government; to persuade others that it is the best; and having done so, to stir them up to insist on having it, is the order of ideas in the minds of those who adopt this view of political philosophy. They look upon a constitution in the same light . . . as they would upon a steam plough or a threshing machine.¹

On the other hand there is the doctrine of those who like Coleridge or Macaulay regard "the science of government as a branch . . . of natural history. According to them, forms of government are not a matter of choice. We must take them in the main as we find them. Governments cannot be constructed by premeditated design." For this school social forces, irrational wants, and basic instincts produce a political order by a process of organic growth.

The true situation seems to lie somewhere between the two extremes. The truth of the first position is that human voluntary agency is the source of all institutions. Men are the foundation of government, and its perpetuation demands not only acquiescence but will. This means that there are three basic conditions upon which government must rest; (1) there must be willing acceptance, (2) there must be will to preserve it, (3) there must be willingness to act so that it may realize its purposes. Any failure to meet these three conditions means the failure of democratic government.² The theory that any type of government is sociologically possible, and the opposite theory that social factors are the moving agency of choice are equally untenable, although the former contains truth more basic to political engineering than the latter.

¹Ibid., p. 175.

²Ibid., p. 178.

The result of what has been said is, that, within the limits set by the three conditions so often adverted to, institutions and forms of government are a matter of choice. To inquire into the best form of government in the abstract (as it is called) is not a chimerical, but a highly practical employment of scientific intellect; and to introduce into any country the best institutions which, in the existing state of that country, are capable of, in any tolerable degree, fulfilling the conditions, is one of the most rational objects to which practical effort can address itself.¹

Although events had forced Mill to contrast the rationalism of utilitarian political theory and the sociologism of the historical school, and to repudiate the excesses of either doctrine, his own sympathies were with the former. Mill was aware of the limitations upon the exercise of human will by social forces, but believed that human will could break through a rigid social determinism. This had been the argument at the root of the theory of "social tendency" so strongly urged in the "Logic of the Moral Sciences."

The central position of will controls the excesses of James Mill's mechanism and Macaulay's social determinism. Mill admits that "in politics as in mechanics, the power which is to keep the engine going must be sought for outside the machinery; and if it is not forthcoming, or is insufficient to surmount the obstacles which may reasonably be expected, the contrivance will fall,"² but he also states,

Politically speaking, a great part of all power consists in will To think that because those who wield the power in society, wield in the end that of government, therefore it is of no use to attempt to influence the constitution of the government, by acting on opinion is to forget that opinion is itself one of the greatest active social forces. One person with a belief is a social power equal to ninety-nine who have only interests.³

If the assumption be granted that society has power to choose between alternative systems of government, what must be the

¹Ibid., pp. 181 f.

³Ibid., p. 183.

²Ibid., p. 182.

criterion of a rational choice. Consistency requires Mill to appeal to the moral ultimacy of the principle of utility. Although the precise functions of government will depend on the evolutionary state of society, "the influence of government on the well-being of society can be considered or estimated in reference to nothing less than the whole of the interests of humanity." Thus we are "obliged to place before ourselves as the test of good and bad government so complex an object as the aggregate interests of society."

But how can we analyze the aggregate interests of society? Mill begins with the classification suggested by Comte and Coleridge. The social desiderata are order and progress. This classification proves to be inadequate. If order be interpreted as obedience to authority, the value of such obedience depends wholly upon the moral quality of the authority exercised, whereas if order be interpreted as "the preservation of peace by the cessation of private violence," order is not a criterion of governmental excellence, but the barest condition of its existence. The broadest definition of order would call it the preservation of all existent goods, but if progress be defined as the increase of goods not yet attained, these concepts are no longer opposed. For purposes of simplicity, progress may be considered the more fundamental term. But it has the disadvantage of abstractness, and does not sufficiently explain the true criterion of good government.

Since the criteria of order and progress are insufficient, a criterion which does not share their limitations must be set up. This task is not difficult.

If we ask ourselves on what causes and conditions good government in all its senses, from the humblest to the most exalted depends, we find that the principal of them, the one which transcends all others, is the qualities of the human beings composing the society over which the government is exer-

cised.¹

All types of political machinery, whether legislative bodies, executive functions, or judicial rules of procedure, ultimately depend upon the moral disposition and ethical intentions of men. The first criterion of government is the qualities of individual men.² It is also true that political machinery is of some importance. This brings into prominence the second element of good government.

We may consider then as one criterion of the goodness of a government, the degree in which it tends to increase the sum of good qualities in the governed, collectively and individually; since, besides that their well-being is the sole object of government, their good qualities supply the moving force which works the machinery. This leaves, as the other constituent element of the merit of a government, the quality of the machinery itself; that is, the degree in which it is adapted to take advantage of the amount of good qualities which may at any time exist, and make them instrumental to the right purposes.³

That Mill sets up not one but two criteria of governmental excellence is significant. It indicates the distance he had traversed since his youthful acceptance of the political position expressed in his father's Essay on Government as well as the fairness and good sense which prompted him to retain what was sound in the doctrine. The issue between social reform through moral reform of personality or social reform through institutional reorganization of society is one which tends to recur throughout Mill's writings in moral and social philosophy. Its psychological sources are to be found in the Utilitarianism; its economic implications

¹Ibid., p. 192.

²"The first element of good government, therefore being the virtue and intelligence of the human beings composing the community, the most important point of excellence which any form of government can possess is to promote the virtue and intelligence of the people themselves. The first question in respect to any political institutions is, how far they tend to foster in the members of the community the various desirable qualities, moral and intellectual." Ibid., p. 193.

³Ibid.

are stated in the critique of collectivism contained in the "Chapters on Socialism"; its political phase is here expressed in the Representative Government. As I have previously stated, the emphasis of the Philosophical Radicals was upon institutional change. John Stuart Mill's moral idealism and personalistic psychology did not permit him to accept this approach. As a result, whereas Bentham stressed machinery, Mill stresses personality; whereas the former advocated political reform through legal revision, the latter advocated political through moral education. However, Mill did not repudiate completely the institutional approach of Bentham and his father. Indeed, his political theory can be interpreted as a constant effort to absorb all that was best in the theory of Philosophical Radicalism into an enlarged perspective. The two criteria of a good form of government, the moral and the institutional, are indicative of this attempt.

Mill's general position is this. Human motivation presents a problem in political philosophy. There is not by nature a coincidence between public benefit and private good. The opposition between duty and interest has political importance. In an ideal system there would be no such opposition,¹ but because it does exist, there must be political machinery. This machinery is by itself no guarantee of good government for "political checks will no more act of themselves than a bridle will direct a horse without a rider," but still effective machinery is politically desirable. It is necessary, but not sufficient, and it is not sufficient because "Whenever the general disposition of the people is such that

¹"The ideally perfect constitution of a public office is that in which the interest of the functionary is entirely coincident with his duty. No mere system will make it so, but still less can it be made so without a system, aptly devised for the purpose." Ibid., pp. 194 f.

each individual regards those only of his interests which are selfish, and does not dwell on or concern himself for his share of the general interest, in such a state of things good government is impossible."¹ The second criterion of a good form of government is less important than the first. Procedures of government are technical rather than moral and vary less with the form of government than with the situations with which they deal.² The specific problems of government are grounded in the sciences dealing with their subject matter; social science is ancillary to the art of politics. On the other hand, with regard to the general intellectual and moral advancement of the community, political institutions need to be adapted to the particular requirements of particular stages of historical evolution. Mill is willing to concede to Coleridge and Macaulay the necessity for "the adaptation of forms of government to states of society," but he remains unconvinced that momentary considerations outweigh principles of ultimate import. "It follows, that to judge of the merits of forms of government, an ideal must be constructed of the form of government most eligible in itself."

Construction of the ideal form of government demands the repudiation of what is not ideal.

It has long (perhaps throughout the entire duration of British freedom) been a common saying, that if a good despot could be ensured, despotic monarchy would be the best form of government. I look upon this as a radical and most pernicious misconception of what good government is; which, until it can be got rid of,

¹Ibid., p. 193.

²"General jurisprudence, civil and penal legislation, financial and commercial policy are sciences in themselves, or rather, separate members of the comprehensive science or art of government: and the most enlightened doctrines on all these subjects, though not equally likely to be understood, or acted on under all forms of government, yet, if understood and acted on, would in general be equally beneficial under them all." Ibid., p. 196.

will fatally vitiate all our speculations on government.¹

Absolute centralization of power cannot be good government. Not only are individuals insufficiently qualified, but even if they were, the effect of autocratic central control would be to encourage complete passivity in the citizens as a whole. This passivity would cause not only the total abrogation of the right of self-determination in a free people, but the dwarfing of their intelligence, and the destruction of their moral capacity.²

It is not much to be wondered at if impatient or disappointed reformers, groaning under the impediments opposed to the most salutary public improvements by the ignorance, the indifference, the intractableness, the perverse obstinacy of a people and the corrupt combinations of selfish private interests armed with the powerful weapons afforded by free institutions, should at times sigh for a strong hand to bear down all these obstacles and compel a recalcitrant people to be better governed. But (setting aside the fact that for one despot who now and then reforms an abuse, there are ninety-nine who do nothing but create them) those who look in any such direction for the realization of their hopes, leave out of the idea of good government its principal element, the improvement of the people themselves.³

Tested by the first criterion, absolute authority vested in a single individual is untenable.

In contrast to the conclusions respecting absolutism

there is no difficulty in showing that the ideally best form of government is that in which the sovereignty, or supreme controlling power in the last resort, is vested in the entire aggregate of the community; every citizen not only having a voice in the exercise of that ultimate sovereignty, but being, at least occasionally called on to take an actual part in the government, by the personal discharge of some public function, local or general.⁴

Popular government meets both the standards for a good form of

¹Ibid., p. 202.

²The first few pages of Chapter III of the Representative Government present as eloquent argument against the practice and technique of dictatorship as is to be found in the literature of political philosophy.

³Ibid., p. 206.

⁴Ibid., p. 207.

government. In the first place it sets up governmental machinery which efficiently utilizes the available motives of men. At this point Mill's argument is strictly Benthamite. Although it is not necessary to maintain that men are exclusively egoistic, interests which are not personally represented, are likely to be either neglected or distorted. And the diffusion of public welfare and prosperity is a function of the "amount and variety of the personal energies enlisted in promoting it." The combination of these ideas yields this principle;

Human beings are only secure from evil at the hands of others in proportion as they have the power of being and are self-protecting; and they only achieve a high degree of success in their struggle with Nature in proportion as they are self-dependent.¹

In the second place, the claim for universal participation in government is validated by appeal to its effects upon human character. Here Mill but reasserts his faith in political activism, expressed as early as 1836 in the London Review article "De Tocqueville On Democracy In America." Moral and intellectual education are furthered only by the active exercise of judgment and choice. Intellectual vigor is the product of activity and the exigencies of political life. Submission to political authority externally imposed engenders a dangerous passivity. The freedom which is gained by political self-determination is a precondition of moral personality. By participation in broad social processes, men are encouraged to appreciate perspectives beyond the narrow self-interest of their daily occupations.

From these accumulated considerations it is evident that the only government which can fully satisfy all the exigencies of the social state is one in which the whole people participate;

¹Ibid., p. 208. Mill further states, "The former proposition - that each is the only safe guardian of his own rights and interests - is one of those elementary maxims of prudence, which every person, capable of conducting his own affairs, implicitly acts upon, wherever he himself is interested."

that any participation, even in the smallest public function, is useful; that the participation should everywhere be as great as the general degree of improvement of the community will allow; and that nothing less can be ultimately desirable than the admission of all to a share in the sovereign power of the state. But since all cannot, in a community exceeding a single small town, participate personally in any but some very minor portions of the public business, it follows that the ideal type of a perfect government must be representative.¹

It is necessary to determine the precise meaning of representation. Representative government refers to a system in which deputies periodically elected, and representing the general will, act as agents of the aggregate of citizens in whom is vested ultimate political sovereignty. But in precisely what respect do these deputies act as agents? Here a distinction can be made between the administrative and deliberative functions of a representative body. The latter belong to it par excellence. The executive branch of government must serve as the direct administrator of political business; representative bodies are not to do but to control. The task of representatives is the formulation of public policy.

What can be done better by a body than by any individual is deliberation. When it is necessary or important to secure hearing and consideration to many conflicting opinions, a deliberative body is indispensable.²

The representative body is an organization for the airing of sectional grievances, the publicising of rational arguments, the federation of organized opinion. Its ultimate purpose is the codification of social policy and this is the final product of a process of deliberation. Deliberation is an intercommunication of minds in open debate.

I know not how a representative assembly can more usefully employ itself than in talk, when the subject of talk is the great public interests of the country, and every sentence of it represents the opinion either of some important body of persons in the nation, or of an individual in whom some such body have reposed their confidence. . . . Such "talking" would never

¹Ibid., pp. 217 f.

²Ibid., p. 231.

be looked upon with disparagement if it were not allowed to stop "doing"; which it never would, if assemblies knew and acknowledged that talking and discussion are their proper business while "doing" as the result of discussion is the task, not of a miscellaneous body, but of individuals specially trained to it.¹

From "the proper functions of representative bodies," Mill passes to consideration "of the infirmities and dangers to which representative government is liable." The line of argument here parallels that of "The Rationale of Political Representation" appearing twenty-five years previously in the London Review.²

The positive evils and dangers of the representative, as of every other form of government may be reduced to two heads: first general ignorance and incapacity, or, to speak more moderately, insufficient mental qualifications, in the controlling body; secondly, the danger of its being under the influence of interests not identical with the general welfare of the community.³

The first evil, ignorance and incapacity, in a democratic system takes the form of instability and shortsightedness of policy as Mill had had occasion to point out in the London Review article of 1836. In the Representative Government Mill meets this argument by a denial that any other governmental form is superior to democracy in this respect. Aristocracy and monarchy are open to the same charges of inexpertness of personnel. Comparison of forms only becomes invidious for representative government in the case of bureaucracy, that is to say government by professionals. But although bureaucracy may be superior to democratic government in the accumulation of experience and practical wisdom, in certain respects it is inferior. Bureaucratic government entails limitation of spontaneity and enthronement of routine, and in time loses its vitality. The same limitation does not hold for a democracy.

¹Ibid., p. 240.

²Supra, p. 88.

³Representative Government, p. 243.

Mill had long recognized that ideal government must combine the democratic principle of wide-spread popular sovereignty with the aristocratic principle of superior leadership. His solution to the problem raised lies in his rigid delimitation of the proper functions of the representative body. This delimitation as previously stated involves the separation of deliberative and administrative functions, the former to embody the democratic, the latter to embody the aristocratic principle.¹

Mill's treatment of the second evil of representative government, the lack of an identity of interest between the rulers and the ruled, is a return to the position of James Mill's Essay On Government.

We next proceed to the evils arising from the prevalence of modes of action in the representative body, dictated by sinister interests (to employ the useful phrase introduced by Bentham), that is, interests conflicting more or less with the general good of the community. It is universally admitted that of the evils incident to monarchical and aristocratic governments, a large proportion arise from this cause. The interest of the monarch, or the interest of the aristocracy, either collective or that of its individual members, is promoted, or they themselves think that it will be promoted, by conduct opposed to that which the general interest of the community requires.²

Although the argument of conflict of interest is clearest against aristocratic forms of government, it may likewise be brought against democracy. Particularly where democracy means the rulership of a numerical majority, it is to be expected that class interests and sectional differences will dictate a public policy other than that of the collective interests of the whole. At this point a distinction must be made between the real and apparent interests of individuals.

The distinction between real and apparent interest is politically important because deception in this matter may be encour-

¹Ibid., p. 241.

²Ibid., p. 248.

rated by particular governmental forms. Two of the most obvious classifications of interest are those of selfish as opposed to unselfish and immediate as opposed to remote. It is a maxim of utilitarian theory that interest in terms of happiness is always to be maximized regardless of the above classifications. It is, however, a matter of observation that men do decide in favor of immediate, selfish interests to the prejudice of remote and altruistic ones. Concentration of political power has a tendency to aggravate this situation.¹ Since this is the case, democratic majority rule presents a political problem.

One of the greatest dangers, therefore, of democracy, as of all other forms of government, lies in the sinister interest of the holders of power: it is the danger of class legislation; of government intended for (whether really effecting it or not) the immediate benefit of the dominant class, to the lasting detriment of the whole. And one of the most important questions demanding consideration, in determining the best constitution of a representative government, is how to provide efficacious securities against this evil.²

It is commonly held that evils of popular ignorance and class legislation may be mitigated by drastic restriction of the suffrage right. However, there is reason to believe that adequate representation of interests may be effected not by abandonment of democratic principles but by carrying them to their logical conclusion.

Two very different ideas are usually confounded under the name democracy. The pure idea of democracy, according to its definition, is the government of the whole people by the whole people equally represented. Democracy as commonly conceived and hitherto practiced is the government of the whole people by a mere majority of the people, exclusively represented. The former is synonymous with the equality of all citizens; the latter, strangely confounded with it, is a government of privilege, in favour of the numerical majority who alone possess practically any voice in the State.³

It is necessary that there be substituted for a despotism of the numerical majority a system of democracy in which proportional representation prevails.

¹Ibid., pp. 252 f.

²Ibid., p. 254.

³Ibid., pp. 256 f.

Mill's advocacy of the Hare plan in the Representative Government follows the general line of reasoning set down in the "Recent Writers on Reform." Thus it is argued that proportional representation destroys the dangers to which democracies are susceptible. In the first place the protection of the rights of minorities insured by proportional representation guarantees a just expression of various interests within the state,¹ and in the second place, such protection automatically tends to check "the natural tendency of representative government . . . towards collective mediocrity." The concentration of votes under proportional representation makes possible election to office of the more highly gifted and intellectual members of a community. And these individuals once in office could serve the double function of influencing the deliberations of their colleagues, and of constituting themselves centers of resistance to the irresponsible exercise of power by majority groups.

The essay on Representative Government restates the insights of the "Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform" and the "Recent Writers on Reform" in the matter of universal suffrage and plural voting. Participation in the political process by political discussion and collective political action is every man's individual right as well as the means of coordinating the interests and attitudes of the members of a social community.

No arrangement of the suffrage, therefore can be permanently satisfactory in which any person or class is peremptorily excluded; in which the electoral privilege is not open to all persons of full age who desire to obtain it.²

But it is clear to Mill that the concept of universal suffrage does not imply the necessity that the vote of each should count

¹Ibid., p. 260.

²Ibid., p. 280.

equally.¹ On the contrary, votes must be weighted differentially, and the basis of this weighting must be the standard of intellectual superiority.² To make mental qualification the criterion of power is in itself the method best adapted to encourage the development of this quality.³

Two further political problems are dealt with in the Representative Government, although in essence they are one and the same. The problems are whether pledges ought to be demanded of representatives in a democracy, and what must be the character of the executive branch of a representative government. These two reduce to the problem with which Mill struggled from the very beginnings of his political speculations, how is it possible to unite the respect for excellence characteristic of aristocratic political philosophies, with the respect for general welfare which is the underlying principle of democracy.

We have from the first affirmed, and unvaryingly kept in view, the co-equal importance of two great requisites of government; responsibility to those for whose benefit political power ought to be, and always professes to be, employed; and jointly therewith to obtain, in the greatest measure possible, for the function of government the benefits of superior intellect, trained by long meditation and practical discipline to that special task.⁴

From the second of these requisites it follows that the representatives of the people ought not to be held to rigid confor-

¹Ibid., p. 284.

²Ibid., p. 285.

³Mill's statement on this point is admirable as an insight into the nature of power. "The position which gives the strongest stimulus to the growth of intelligence is that of rising into power, not that of having achieved it; and of all resting-points, temporary or permanent, in the way to ascendancy, the one which develops the best and highest qualities is the position of those who are strong enough to make reason prevail, but not strong enough to prevail against reason." Ibid., p. 289.

⁴Ibid., p. 317.

mity with the opinions of their constituents. Being more competent and politically instructed than the constituency itself, they, rather than the individuals whom they represent, are to be entrusted with the formulation of public policy. For this situation to arise, it is necessary that "the electors should choose a representative more highly instructed than themselves." This in turn raises the previously noted difficulty of public recognition and selection of excellence for political office. Mill states the paradox involved.

It is so important that the electors should choose as their representatives wiser men than themselves, and should consent to be governed according to that superior wisdom, while it is impossible that conformity to their own opinions, when they have opinions, should not enter largely into their judgment as to who possesses the wisdom, and how far its presumed possessor has verified the presumption by his conduct; that it seems quite impracticable to lay down for the elector any positive rule of duty: and the result will depend less on any exact prescription or authoritative doctrine of political morality, than on the general tone of mind of the electoral body, in respect to the important requisite of deference to mental superiority.¹

Nonetheless, once the importance of securing exceptionally gifted and intelligent representatives is clear to the mass of the people, the standards by which such qualifications are to be judged can be made readily available.² Representatives of proven superiority are entitled to a freedom to exercise their own judgment. But the electors are entitled to be informed of the basic political philosophy of their representative.³

¹Ibid., p. 319.

²Ibid., p. 320.

³"A people cannot be well governed in opposition to their primary notions of right even though these may be in some points erroneous. A correct estimate of the relation which should subsist between governors and governed, does not require the electors to consent to be represented by one who intends to govern them in opposition to their fundamental convictions." Ibid., p. 322.

The second provision which the Representative Government presents to ensure competent leadership in a democracy concerns the executive branch of government. Mill's treatise was never intended to deal with other than the broad principles of a philosophy of government and so in this matter he contents himself with a cursory statement. The first rule for the executive is that there be a centralization of authority and absolute localization of responsibility. It is possible that the two requisites of an adequate executive, ability in technical matters, and centralized responsibility are not of necessity compatible with one another. Insofar as responsibility may bring about fairly frequent removal from office, whereas technical ability may depend upon practical experience itself the consequence of secure and lengthy tenure of office, the two may be incompatible. Mill's resolution of this difficulty is simple: it provides for the existence of administrating and coordinating executives who serve in the capacity of removable centers of responsibility, while the individuals under them compose a permanent body of expert advisers.¹ This machinery allows for efficiency without corruption. A further corollary of this idea is that those in the executive branch should not be chosen in the manner of legislative representatives.

A most important principle of good government in a popular constitution is that no executive functionaries should be appointed by popular election; neither by the votes of the people themselves, nor by those of their representatives. The entire business of government is skilled employment; the qualifications for the discharge of it are of that special and professional kind which cannot properly be judged of except by persons who have themselves some share of those qualifications or some practical experience of them. The business of finding the fittest persons to fill public employments is very laborious, and requires a delicate as well as highly conscientious

¹"This mode of conducting the highest class of administrative business is one of the most successful instances of the adaptation of means to ends which political history, not hitherto very prolific in works of skill and contrivance has yet to show." Ibid., p. 335.

tious discernment.¹

With the exception of the higher officials, those designated as removable centers of responsibility, all members of the executive are to be considered under civil service provisions, and subject to "the principle of competitive examinations for public employment."² This conception of the executive branch of government ensures efficiency in a democratic political system, and provides technical ability for the execution of public policy.

I should now like to summarize the conclusions of this chapter. Mill's political speculations begin in the atmosphere of his father's Essay On Government. This essay stated that political problems are generated by the incompatible interests of men, and pointed out the danger if special interests were granted superior power. Since this danger appeared very real to John Stuart Mill, his chief contributions to political theory up to the year 1840 were centered about the problem of obtaining a fair representation of interests within society. This enterprise, Benthamite in origin, and reinforced by the insights of de Tocqueville, finds its clearest expression in the "Rationale of Political Representation" and the review of de Tocqueville's book of 1835. The positive outcome of these early speculations is the affirmation of the principle of democracy. Governments, as James Mill had affirmed, being but means to the end of utility, democracy is the only form which permits a just representation of interests. Society is divisible into the class of those who exercise political power, and the class of those over whom political power is exercised and just allocation of power is that which will ensure an ultimate identity of interest between ruler and ruled. A democratic form of govern-

¹Ibid., pp. 335 f.

²Ibid., pp. 342 f.

ment, founded upon the requirement that power be vested in those whose interest is affected by its exercise is the only guarantee of political justice.

From his earlier interest in the theory of the democratic state, Mill turned to the problem of method in social science. The shift, as I have previously indicated, was not arbitrary. Mill had been strongly impressed by Macaulay's 1829 Edinburgh Review article attacking his father's Essay on Government. This article had not only been hostile to James Mill's political principles, but had called into question the very method utilized in his political speculations. The doubts raised in the mind of John Stuart Mill by Macaulay's argument, were reinforced by the conclusions of his own political thought. In elaborating the theory of democracy in terms of the necessity for political machinery which should direct personal motives into the channel of public welfare, Mill was led to recognize that political leadership required competence as well as good will. The end of politics is the formulation and execution of a reasonable public policy, but this depends upon a compound of ethical insight and scientific social knowledge. The former, ethical insight, could, in the light of Mill's moral philosophy, be reduced to an acknowledgment of the principle of utility, but the latter, scientific social knowledge, raised a more difficult issue. Can social policy be formulated on the basis of evidence from social science? The sixth book of the System of Logic written in 1840 codified Mill's opinions. This work accepts the Comtian position that the method of social science is the method of science in general, and the theory that despite the complexity of its materials, social science may be of practical value, and also attempts to define the relationship between ethics, social science, and social policy. Social science

may yield knowledge insufficient for accurate prediction but valuable for social guidance while social policy is the concern of the legislator and should result from an attempt to apply the knowledge given in social science toward the achievement of the ultimate value elucidated in ethical speculation.

The culmination of Mill's political speculations was the Representative Government of 1861. This work expresses a continuity with Mill's earliest political thought. It may be interpreted as the attempt to work out the implications of democratic theory, through elaboration of the technique of representative government. The development of Mill's political philosophy is cumulative. His early essays were investigations of the concept of "fairness" in government oriented about the problem of political interest and political power. The investigations of method in social science are political in that they explore the possibility of making knowledge available for political purposes. Mill's return to considerations of principle reflects a conviction that problems of government are concerned with securing machinery which will ensure justice, and knowledge which will ensure efficiency. To the bare statement of the democratic principle he now adds principles of technique such as universal suffrage, plural voting, and proportional representation. For, an adequate social policy can only be constructed within the framework of a political system which permits at once responsibility to those for whose benefit political power ought to be employed and the availability of superior intellect trained for the special task of government.

CONCLUSION

The previous chapters of this essay have been devoted to a study of the social philosophy of John Stuart Mill. As I stated in the introduction, Mill was a social reformer who had inherited his ameliorative interests from Jeremy Bentham and James Mill. As a major figure in the tradition of "Philosophical Radicalism", Mill was interested at once in ethics, political theory, and practical reform.

Despite the diversity of subjects treated in Mill's polemical writings, these can be seen as fragments of a general social philosophy which is more unified than might at first be expected. The unity in Mill's social philosophy is contributed by the purpose implicit in his ethical, political, and economic works. That purpose was to reconstruct society economically and politically in the light of a dominant moral aim.

Mill believed that the enterprise of social reconstruction was at once technical and ethical; in short that it presented both a moral and an adaptive problem. Chapter I has been devoted to the former; Chapters II and III have been devoted to the latter.

Chapter I, Mill's ethical doctrines, contains a summary of Mill's ethics. Beginning with an analysis of Mill's conception of method in moral philosophy in which is treated his views on the establishment of ethical first principles and his critique of moral intuitionism, I have examined the body of his moral doctrines. On the basis of this examination it has been possible to extract the principles of pleasure, calculation, and equality of opportunity.

Chapter II, Mill's economic doctrines, has attempted to indicate how Mill's economic theory matured into a social philosophy, how his thought developed in the direction of socialism, and how in his treatment of the problem of inequality, he was led to envisage a completely new social order. From Mill's economic doctrines it has been possible to isolate the principles of co-operation, proportional distribution, and experimentalism.

Chapter III, Mill's political doctrines, traced the development of his political theory from the early speculations which constituted a critique of democracy, through the examination of the method of the moral sciences back to the later investigation of representative government. Attention to the doctrinal results of this development has suggested the principles of democracy, social knowledge, and representative government.

I should like to re-state in their complete form the principles outlined above.

(1) The ultimate end of society is the production of a maximum amount of pleasurable feeling among its members.

(2) Pleasurable feelings are capable of rational calculation.

(3) All individuals should be given an equal opportunity to possess the means of happiness.

(4) Important economic evils are generated by conflict of interest among the members of society, and must be resisted through the substitution of the principles of cooperation.

(5) The effective economic system will reward effort in proportion to its social service and in its distributive machinery will substitute conditional compensation for absolute equality.

(6) Since there are a plurality of proposals at any given time which claim to solve the economic problem, and since an arbi-

trary choice on the basis of personal bias or political expediency is unwarranted, a choice should be made on the basis of social experiment.

(7) A democratic form of government founded upon the requirement that power be vested in those whose interest is affected by its exercise is the only guarantee of political justice.

(8) Social science may yield knowledge insufficient for accurate prediction, but valuable for social guidance, while social policy is the concern of the legislator and should result from an attempt to apply the knowledge given in social science toward the achievement of the ultimate value elucidated in ethical speculation.

(9) An adequate social policy can only be constructed within the framework of a political system which permits at once responsibility to those for whose benefit political power ought to be employed, and the availability of superior intellect trained for the special task of government.

My claims for these principles fall within acknowledged limits. I would not assert that they exhaust the doctrines to be drawn from Mill's social philosophy. Others are to be found and in fact have been treated within these pages. But I think these nine are characteristic of Mill's social philosophy as a whole. I would not insist that all exist on the same level of importance or generality, or even that Mill thought that they did. They are implicit in his ethical, economic, and political doctrines, although possibly enunciated at different levels of analysis. Finally, I could not claim that these principles are all logically related, or even that their order of presentation reflects the chronological development of Mill's social philosophy. If they are systematic, it is only in the sense that they have been precipitated out of the social philosophy of one whose intellectual

life's work was devoted to the reconstruction of society in the image of human reason.

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